SERMONS

TO

COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

224. K. 20

SERMONS

TO

COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

RECTOR OF BEECHAMWELL, NORFOLK.

VOL. I.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON,

NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;

BY BYE AND LAW, ST. JOHN'S-SQUARE, CLERKENWELL.

1800.

To the Reader.

THE writer of the following pages was born October 12, 1757: was educated at Harrow School: became a member of Clare-hall in Cambridge, January 1775: and was elected a Fellow of that ſociety in 1779. In 1782 he received the degree of Maſter of Arts: and vacated his Fellowſhip by marriage in 1786. In 1788 he became a reſident miniſter of the pariſhes of Mileham and Franſham in Norfolk; which ſituation he changed in 1793 for the adjoining pariſh of Litcham and Lexham. He died January 31ſt, 1795, after a ſhort illneſs, in the 38th year of his age.

It may be imagined, perhaps, by many, that a life, of which ſuch was the out-

line, muſt have been as uſeleſs and inſipid, as it was ſhort and retired. Not ſuch, however, will be the judgment of thoſe whom experience or obſervation may have taught more juſtly to appreciate the character of an exemplary pariſh prieſt. Such will be aware, that to conſtitute that character, there muſt be an union of learning and modeſty; of ſpirit and of patience; that a marked deteſtation of vice muſt be made conſiſtent with unabated charity for the offender; that the conduct of the man muſt never be at variance with the precepts of the preacher; that reproof muſt be tempered with gentleneſs; faith be made manifeſt by works; and zeal be directed by knowledge.

Whoever, indeed, can eſtimate the advantages which reſult to ſociety from the exertions of a man at once ſufficiently dig-

nified and conciliating to " reprove, rebuke, " and exhort with all long-ſuffering and " doctrine ;" who can win over the rich to temperance and charity ; and the poor to honeſt induſtry and contentment : above all, whoever reflects on the bleſſedneſs of turning but one ſinner from the error of his ways unto righteouſneſs, will admit, that when the conſcientious diſcharge of ſuch duties is choſen by any one as the baſis on which to build his character, his labours (albeit hidden in the deepeſt retirement) are ſtill directed to an end not unworthy the commendation of the wiſeſt men, or the gratitude of the beſt.

The following diſcourſes conſtitute the principal labours of their author in his miniſtry. The ſpecies of merit, on which their editor founds his hope of their being well received by the public, is their plain-

neſs: and it was with a reference to this quality that he has intimated in the title page the auditors to whom they were delivered. The reader is requeſted to carry this in his recollection while he peruſes them: becauſe it accounts for, and gives a value to, their great ſimplicity of compoſition, and unornamented language; and is, at the ſame time, a mark of the carefulneſs with which their author accommodated himſelf to the duties of his ſituation. How far he was ſucceſsful in this branch of his Chriſtian duty, the publication of them will enable many to judge; how well his conduct accorded with his precepts can be known only within the limits of a leſs extended circle. Not a few, however, can bear teſtimony to a temper unruffled by accidents, and a cheerfulneſs which never degenerated into levity: to much learning,

and

and great ſedulity: to ſtrict ſelf-regimen: to a judgement which could diſcern frailties, and a candour which failed not to extenuate them: to affability which encouraged the reſerved, and decorum which repreſſed the forward: to kindneſs in general intercourſe, and warmth in particular friendſhip: to active charity and unwearied zeal for the relief of the temporal and ſpiritual wants of all around him. The few who knew him ſtill more intimately witneſſed the exact fulfilment of the duties of a Son, a Brother, an Huſband, and a Father: and cannot plead the want of an example of that more extended Charity which "ſeeketh not her "own, and thinketh no evil:" of that more exalted Wiſdom, which "whoſo "findeth, findeth Life."

Advertiſement.

THE early and ſudden death of the writer of theſe ſermons makes it certain that they were not prepared, or indeed intended, by him, for publication. They are the diſcourſes he preached in the execution of his parochial duty. It is poſſible therefore that they may contain paſſages taken from other writers, and which are unacknowledged. The editor knows not that they are liable to this cenſure: wherever his own recollection has enabled him to make ſuch a diſcovery, he has pointed it out: if more ſuch inſtances are to be found (he truſts there are not) he begs the blame may reſt with him, not with the deceaſed writer, who certainly never intended to have made this uſe of

them. In fact, the editor was urged to publiſh the ſermons as he found them, by ſome of the neighbouring friends of the deceaſed; who having witneſſed the good effects they produced in the pariſhes in which they were delivered, wiſhed to give them a more extended circulation.

One topic which he urged with great earneſtneſs and ſucceſs, was a frequent attendance on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Of his diſcourſes on this ſubject but one will be found in this collection; becauſe, in his life-time, he digeſted the others into the form of a pamphlet, which he publiſhed; and which was productive of very beneficial effects in his neighbourhood, as well by removing the ſcruples of the fearful, as by awakening the attention of the negligent, and informing the minds of the uninſtructed.

CONTENTS.

Vol. I.

SERMON I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

ST. JAMES ii. 26.

PAGE

As the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo - - - - - - 1

TITUS iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying; and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works - - - - - - ibid.

SERMON II.

ON STRIVING TO ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

ST. LUKE xiii. 24.

PAGE

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able - - - - - - - - - - - - 15

SERMON III.

THE DANGERS OF RICHES AND POVERTY.

PROVERBS xxx. 8, 9.

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor and ſteal and take the name of my God in vain - - - - - - - - - 29

SERMON IV.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM cxxxix. 2.

Thou art about my path and about my bed, and ſpieſt out all my ways - - - - - - - - 47

SERMON V.

ON SINS OF OMISSION.

ST. MATTHEW XXV. 30.

PAGE

Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 59

SERMON VI.

ON THE IMPROPRIETY OF DESERTING WORLDLY DUTIES.

ST. MATTHEW XXIII. 23.

Theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone - - - - - - - - - 71

SERMON VII.

ON THE NECESSITY OF TEMPORARY RETIREMENT AND ABSTRACTION.

PSALM IV. 4.

Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be ſtill - - - - - - - - 85

SERMON VIII.

THE EFFICACY OF REPENTANCE.

ST. LUKE xv. 7.

PAGE

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance - - - - - - - - - 99

SERMON IX.

ON CONTENTMENT.

PHIL. iv. 11.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content - - - - - - - - - 115

SERMON X.

ON CALUMNY AND DETRACTION.

EXODUS xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour - - - - - - - - - - - 131

SERMON XI.

AGAINST DRUNKENNESS.

EPHESIANS v. 18.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excefs - PAGE 149

SERMON XII.

ON STEALING.

EXODUS xx. 15.

Thou fhalt not fteal - - - - - - - - - 161

SERMON XIII.

AGAINST SWEARING.

EXODUS xx. 7.

Thou fhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltlefs that taketh his name in vain - - 175

SERMON XIV.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.

ST. LUKE xxiii. 33.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him - 189

SERMON XV.

THE DYING THIEF.

St. Luke xxiii. 43.

PAGE

And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Verily I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe 211

SERMON XVI.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

And when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.— &c. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 225

SERMON XVII.

THE DUTY OF TAKING UP OUR CROSS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

St. Matthew xvi. 24.

Then Jeſus ſaid unto his diſciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me - - - - 237

SERMON XVIII.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

ST. LUKE x. 42.

PAGE
One Thing is needful - - - - - - - - 251

SERMONS XIX. XX.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE SICK.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 1.

Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, and not live - - - - - - - - - - - - - 267

SERMON XXI.

OF CASTING YOUR CARE UPON GOD.

1 PETER v. 7.

Caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you - - - - - - - - - - - - - 297

SERMON I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

ST. JAMES ii. 26.

As the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo.

TITUS iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.

FROM the firſt riſe of chriſtianity down to this preſent time, there has always exiſted a ſet of deſigning or deluded men, calling themſelves chriſtians, who have maintained the doctrine of faith in oppoſition to that of good works; who have imagined, or pre-

SERM. I.

SERM. I. tended to imagine, that a belief in the life, death, and reſurrection of our Saviour, and in the miraculous circumſtances which accompanied each, would exempt them from the practice of the moral virtues, and leave them to the free indulgence of their lawleſs and unruly paſſions.

This doctrine of theirs they have grounded on certain ſelected paſſages of ſcripture, which they have explained in ſuch a manner, as to make them contradict all the reſt of it. They tell us of the frequent and vehement aſſertions of St. Paul, "of juſtification by the free grace of God," and "of being ſaved by faith alone," and "by faith without the works of the law;" and theſe expreſſions they ſo interpret as to make them counteract the whole deſign of religion. Salvation, ſay they, is the free gift of God; it is not of debt but of grace; it is not beſtowed in conſequence of any actions of ours, but gratuitouſly given through God's boundleſs mercy; a lively faith in the merits of our Redeemer is alone requiſite on our parts; what

what we do is out of the queſtion; we have but firmly to believe, and we ſhall be entitled to an inheritance of life eternal. SERM. I.

I propoſe in this diſcourſe to endeavour to overthrow this pernicious opinion, firſt, by explaining what learned men have in general agreed to be the real meaning of the paſſages which appear to make for it: ſecondly, by laying before you ſome ſtrong and clear quotations from the ſcriptures, in which the virtues of a good life are inſiſted on as indiſpenſably neceſſary to ſalvation; and laſtly, by proving, from common ſenſe and reaſon, the abſurdity of expecting the favour of God and the rewards of Heaven on any other terms than by adding to ſound faith good works.

And firſt, I will explain what learned men have, in general, agreed to be the real meaning of the paſſages, which are brought in ſupport of the opinion, that faith alone, unaccompanied by good works, is ſufficient unto ſalvation.

SERM. I. It is very evident that when St. Paul makes uſe of the words election, vocation, adoption, juſtification, and ſome others of the like tenor, he does not always apply them to the *final judgment*; that is, he does not always mean that thoſe who are elected, called, adopted, or juſtified, have already obtained, or ſhall certainly obtain, the kingdom of God. Recollect to whom his epiſtles were addreſſed, to thoſe who had once been heathens, who had worſhipped gods of wood and ſtone, or men frail and wicked as themſelves, and who had no certain rule to live by, and ſcarce knew the difference between virtue and vice; but who had now embraced the chriſtian religion, had become acquainted with the knowledge, which *that* inculcated, and entitled to the rewards, which *that* held forth.

This acquiſition of the laws, and this title to the bleſſings of the goſpel, thus beſtowed on the heathens, the Apoſtle calls their "being elected, adopted, juſtified:" and theſe privileges he affirms them to have obtained

without previous good works, but merely by the free grace of God, on their only believing in the truth of the religion which he had ſent down. Whenever then St. Paul talks of juſtification without works, he always means this firſt juſtification, men being made chriſtians; but this is a very different thing from final juſtification at the laſt day, to which holineſs, virtue, good works, are indiſpenſably neceſſary. SERM. I.

As to the expreſſion of juſtification without the works of the law, it ſometimes means without an obſervance of the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moſes, which ſome early chriſtians inſiſted to be requiſite; but, with reſpect to the moral part of that law, our Saviour and his apoſtles conſtantly declare that they do not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil it.

With theſe two keys I believe that every paſſage of ſcripture, which ſeems to favour the idea of the ſufficiency of faith alone to ſalvation, may be otherwiſe explained; and I leave to every candid perſon to determine

SERM. I. whether that interpretation which makes a good book conſiſtent with itſelf, is not to be preferred before that, which makes it at variance.

And this brings me to what I propoſed in the ſecond place, to lay before you ſome ſtrong and clear quotations from the ſcripture, in which the virtues of a good life are inſiſted on as indiſpenſably neceſſary to ſalvation. And here ſo many paſſages, to this purpoſe, preſs themſelves upon me, that the only difficulty is to ſelect and arrange them. The forerunner of our Saviour, John the Baptiſt, is deſcribed as opening the way for the goſpel, by preaching repentance and remiſſion of ſins, that is by preaching that men ſhould be forgiven on ſorrow for paſt wickedneſs, and amendment in future. Our Saviour alſo began his miniſtry by preaching repentance: "from that time began Jeſus to preach and to ſay, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Or as St. Mark in the parallel paſſage expreſſes it, "the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand,

hand, repent ye and believe the goſpel." Not only believing but forſaking of ſin, and turning to a life of virtue, was required by him of his diſciples. In his ſermon on the mount he particularly inſiſts on the practice of a variety of good qualities, and in one verſe commands us to be exemplary, and even conſpicuous, in the exerciſe of them in general; "let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your *good works*, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." In the ſame excellent diſcourſe he tells his hearers, that except their righteouſneſs, that is, their practice of what is right, ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven. And ſtill more to my preſent purpoſe, he expreſsly declares, that not every one who ſhall ſay unto him "Lord, Lord," ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only that doeth the will of his father; as if he had ſaid, Not they, who only profeſs themſelves to be chriſtians, and who believe and own me to be their maſter, but they who SERM. I.

SERM. I. *do* what I teach ſhall obtain ſalvation. Nay, he goes ſtill further, and tells them that though they ſhall have even performed miracles in his name, yet if they have been diſobedient to his will, and lived wickedly, he ſhall, at the great day of judgment, reply to their claims of acquaintance and favour, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity."

You remember the parable of the king, who made a marriage feaſt for his ſon; thoſe, who were invited, are diſtinguiſhed into three ſorts: firſt, thoſe who were aſked and did not come, by which are meant, thoſe who had the goſpel propoſed to them and did not embrace it: ſecondly, thoſe who came, but had not on a wedding garment, thoſe who had faith in Jeſus, believing him to be the Chriſt, but were not new clad with a true repentance and amendment of life; thirdly, thoſe who were invited, and had on the wedding garment; thoſe who both believed the goſpel, and practiſed the precepts which it enjoins. Here you may obſerve,

ſerve, that belief without practice is equally condemned with unbelief: Bind him, ſays the king, ſpeaking of the gueſt without a wedding garment, hand and foot, and take him away, and caſt him into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. They only were allowed to remain at the feaſt, to ſit down in the kingdom of heaven, who both attended to the invitation of the king and came properly prepared; who both acknowledged Chriſt to be the Son of God, and followed that courſe of life which he pointed out. It is likewiſe very worthy of your notice, that in all the places where our Saviour ſpeaks of the day of judgment, the ſentence follows on *doing or not doing*, without any mention of *believing*. In the fifth chapter of St. John are theſe words, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves ſhall hear my voice, and ſhall come forth, they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation." In the ſeventh chapter of St. Matthew, ſpeak- SERM. I.

SERM. I. ſpeaking of the ſame day, he ſays, "depart from me ye workers of iniquity." In the thirteenth, "the Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which *do* iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire." And again in the ſixteenth chapter: "For the Son of Man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he ſhall reward every man according to his works."

This you will find invariably to be the manner of proceeding in all the other places of ſcripture where our Lord ſpeaks of the laſt day; acceptance or condemnation are conſtantly annexed to doing or not doing, without any notice of believing. Let me not, however, be miſunderſtood; I do not mean that faith in Chriſt is unneceſſary; on the contrary, in thoſe who have the goſpel propoſed to them it is abſolutely neceſſary; but that faith which ſhews itſelf in a good life, is alone a faith unto ſalvation.

What

" What doth it profit a man (ſaith St. James) though he ſay he hath faith and hath not works; can faith ſave him? Faith without works is dead, being alone; by works faith is made perfect. As the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo." To conclude this head, it is evident beyond all diſpute, from the whole tenor of the ſcriptures, that purity of conduct, as well as firmneſs of belief, is abſolutely eſſential to entitle us to a place in the manſions of the bleſſed. But laſtly, even if the ſcriptures had not ſpoken ſo expreſsly, the abſurdity of expecting the favour of God, and the rewards of Heaven, on any other terms than by adding to a ſound faith, good works, is evident from common ſenſe and reaſon. God, it is univerſally agreed, poſſeſſes in the moſt perfect degree the attributes of purity and holineſs; is it then at all credible that a being of this kind ſhould ſend down, and reveal to his creatures, a religion which ſhould let looſe the reins to every corrupt paſſion, and autho-

SERM. I.

rize

SERM. I. rize them in the indulgence of every evil inclination? which ſhould hold forth to them the promiſe of eternal happineſs on the ſole condition of yielding their aſſent to ſome few points of faith, but ſhould leave them under the ſame ſlaviſh ſubmiſſion to their luſts in which it found them? It is not credible; every ſuggeſtion of ſenſe and reaſon cries out againſt it. For conſider whither ſuch a poſition would carry us! Religion only aims to regulate our belief: very well; I firmly credit all which it requires of me, and on this ground I look for the rewards which it promiſes, let my practice be what it may; I will only take care not to ſubject myſelf to the puniſhment of human laws, and I will be as wicked as intereſt invites or impels me, fearleſs on this account of any after-reckoning in futurity. Am I avaricious? I will take every opportunity of defrauding my neighbour of his property. Am I revengeful? neither the reputation nor the perſon of him who has accidentally injured me, or whoſe intereſt interferes with mine,

mine, ſhall be ſacred from my attacks. Am I ſenſual? Let my friend beware of me; I will ſeduce from him the affections of his wife, or I will rob him of the innocence of his child; for ſo long as I am a *believer*, I can commit all theſe enormities unchecked or undiſturbed by my conſcience. Honour and honeſty may here be alleged as reſtraints upon me; with ſome men I grant they would, but with far the majority they will be found feeble ties againſt the allurements of paſſion, ſupported by the hopes of impunity. You ſee then into what abſurdities the idea of the ſufficiency of faith without works leads; you perceive what a world this would be, if ſuch a perſuaſion were univerſally prevalent. SERM. I.

Let us not then ſeparate thoſe two friends which agree ſo well together, religion and morality; let us not content ourſelves with taking up the ſhield of faith, but let us put on, at the ſame time, the whole armour of righteouſneſs; it is that alone which can empower us to withſtand the aſſaults and be victorious

SERM. I. torious over the malice of our grand adverſary; it is that alone which can enable us to appear with decent confidence before the tribunal of our judge and Saviour. They worſhip God beſt who reſemble him moſt; let us then not only believe what he has revealed, but let us practice what he has commanded; let us endeavour to be like him in purity and goodneſs; let us conduct all which relates to ourſelves with decency and propriety; all which concerns our fellow creatures with juſtice and benevolence; let us poſſeſs our own veſſels with ſanctification and honour, and do unto others, as we would they ſhould do unto us.

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON STRIVING TO ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

ST. LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

FAR the greater number of people appear to be in a middle ſtate between virtue and vice; they are neither entirely good nor entirely wicked; whenever they think on the ſubject, they will own that there are ſuch places as heaven and hell, and that they ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed after their death, according as they ſhall have behaved themſelves while they were in this world; but they

SERM. II. they ſhew ſufficiently by their actions, that their belief is not firm and ſteady, otherwiſe they would not content themſelves with ſeeking, with uſing ſome faint endeavours to gain the kingdom of Heaven, but would ſtrive, would exert all their might to acquire that invaluable prize.

I propoſe, in this diſcourſe, to point out to you, firſt, ſome of thoſe perſons who may be ſaid to ſeek the kingdom of heaven, but who only ſeeking it ſhall not attain it; I propoſe, ſecondly, to ſhew what is meant by ſtriving to gain the kingdom of heaven; and I propoſe, laſtly, to bring forward the weighty motives by which we are urged to be amongſt thoſe who ſtrive.

The firſt and loweſt example, which I ſhall mention, of perſons who ſeek the kingdom of Heaven, is that of thoſe who content themſelves with deſires and wiſhes only; who think at times, what a delightful circumſtance it would be to enjoy everlaſting happineſs; and what a dreadful circumſtance it would be, to be doomed to everlaſting

ing torments, and at thoſe moments will call out "Lord, Lord," but who will not deny themſelves in any one inſtance, or ſtir one ſingle ſtep beſides. SERM. II.

Can people of this deſcription really expect that their wiſhes will be anſwered? I am ſure they cannot reaſon by what they ſee paſſing on earth. Will wiſhing for any thing which is valuable be ſufficient to obtain it here? Will wiſhes clothe a man, will wiſhes feed him, will wiſhes enable him to provide for his family? Can I, by deſiring it only, become learned, rich, or reſpectable? No,—I muſt add to my deſires, endeavours; I muſt exert myſelf; I muſt ſtudy or I muſt labour, and that not ſlightly, or now and then, but vigorouſly and without remiſſion, or my deſires will avail me nothing. And is it poſſible I can for a moment flatter myſelf, that when it requires ſo much pains to gain any earthly good, I ſhall be advanced to everlaſting joys in heaven without any pains at all! The thing ſpeaks for itſelf.

SERM. II.

But perhaps people, who content themſelves with deſires only, buoy themſelves up with ſome general notions of the goodneſs and mercy of God; that God is merciful, is certain, but he is likewiſe juſt; he forgives ſins, but not merely becauſe we wiſh it: it is neceſſary that we pray heartily for his forgiveneſs, that we are ſincerely ſorry that we have done amiſs, that we reſolve ſteadily to do ſo no more, and that we *keep* our reſolutions: theſe are the terms, the only terms of acceptance, as he has repeatedly declared in the holy ſcriptures. Both reaſon and ſcripture therefore join to aſſure us, that they, who build their expectation of heaven merely on their wiſhes, build on no foundation.

A ſecond deſcription of perſons that I ſhall notice, who may be ſaid to ſeek the kingdom of heaven, are thoſe whoſe endeavours are only exerted by fits and ſtarts; who, on reading any good book, hearing any awakening diſcourſe, or on having ſome ſerious thoughts ſuggeſted to them by

God's holy ſpirit, are for awhile religious and virtuous, but in time of temptation fall away; they are unable to reſiſt the ſolicitations of vicious companions, or the enticements of deſires, to which they have been uſed heretofore to yield; their righteouſneſs is like the early cloud and the morning dew; it ſo ſoon paſſes away. It is indeed preferable to uninterrupted wickedneſs, becauſe it gives ground to hope that it may by degrees become more ſteady; but in itſelf it is of no avail: he who poſſeſſes it, can only be ſaid to ſeek, not to ſtrive after the kingdom of heaven, and has therefore no grounds from ſcripture to flatter himſelf with ſucceſs. "When a righteous man "turneth away from his righteouſneſs, "and committeth iniquity, and dieth in "it, all his righteouſneſs ſhall be counted "as nothing: for his iniquity that he hath "done, ſhall he die." SERM. II.

In the third ſet of perſons, who come within the meaning of the text, of ſeeking and not ſtriving, we may reckon thoſe, who

SERM. II. have diſcarded all their frailties and ſins except one, and who flatter themſelves that their good behaviour in all other particulars will atone for a ſingle deficiency. But they will find themſelves miſerably deceived: either the kingdom of heaven is, or is not an object worthy of being contended for; if it is not, let drop all concern about it; let us eat, drink, and be merry; let us make ourſelves as happy as we can in this world, without any thought of futurity; but if the kingdom of heaven be (as indeed it is) of the moſt conſummate and inexpreſſible importance, if it be worthy that we ſhould conſider every earthly good as leſs than nothing in compariſon of it, that alone ſurely ought to occupy our care and engroſs our affections; every thing elſe ought to yield to it, for it is very certain that one ſingle preference of an earthly good, if habitually indulged, will take away all chance of attaining heaven. "Whoſo-
"ever ſhall keep the whole law (ſays St.
"James) and yet offend in one point, he
"is

" is guilty of all," he is guilty of giving a preference to his luſt in one particular inſtance over his duty, of ſetting an higher eſteem upon things preſent than things future, and therefore he muſt expect to reap the fruits of his abſurdity in being deprived of that reward to which his conduct in other reſpects, were it not for this one deficiency, would entitle him. I have heard of a perſon contending in a race for a prize of vaſt importance, who was prevented from winning it by turning out of the way to pick up ſome golden balls, which were from time to time thrown down by the competitor for that purpoſe; preciſely ſimilar is the folly of theſe perſons who ſuffer themſelves to be diverted from attaining the glorious prize of heaven, by the riches, honours, or pleaſures of this world, which the adverſary of our ſouls is ever taking occaſion to diſplay before us. SERM. II.

Having given you theſe inſtances of perſons who only ſeek to gain the kingdom of heaven, and who will therefore fail of the

SERM. II. prize; I ſhall now lay before you the character and conduct of one who ſtrives, and who ſtriving will be ſure to obtain. Such an one, in the firſt place, does not content himſelf with bare wiſhes, as he well knows that he may profeſs *them* in common with the moſt abandoned of mankind; for however profligate a man may chuſe to be in this world, he would certainly deſire rather to be happy than miſerable in the next; though he may prefer the pleaſures of vice, he would clearly wiſh for the rewards of virtue; though he cannot prevail on himſelf to live the life of the righteous, he would indubitably be rejoiced to die his death. One who is in earneſt then with reſpect to obtaining heaven, knows that to wiſh for it alone would be of no ſervice to him. Another thing alſo, of which he is ſenſible, is, that to be devout by fits and ſtarts only, will not anſwer his purpoſe; his exertions to pleaſe God (which can only be done by piety towards him, kindneſs towards men, and by temperance, ſobriety, and chaſtity, in his own conduct) muſt

must be conſtant and unremitted; he does not then put on theſe virtues only at particular times, and on particular occaſions, but makes them habitual to him; he renders himſelf ſo completely maſter of them, that they pervade, they make a part of his whole behaviour: another particular alſo, which he knows to be neceſſary, and therefore ſtrives to attain is, not merely to be obedient to a part of God's commands, but to them all; he knows, that though the Almighty will take up with our imperfect obedience, if our endeavours are ſincere, yet that he will by no means ſuffer us to live in the willing breach of any one of his commands. Life and death, God and the world, are before us; we muſt make our choice between them; if we are reſolved to indulge ourſelves in any one known ſin, we plainly ſhew that there is ſomething which we prefer to God, and we muſt take the conſequences of our folly. He who ſtrives to obtain the kingdom of heaven, may, and probably will, ſometimes fall, but he muſt not fall willingly; he muſt exert

SERM. II.

SERM. II. exert himſelf againſt temptation; he muſt recover himſelf as ſoon as poſſible; he muſt be grieved and humbled by his frailty; and he muſt uſe every effort to keep himſelf more ſteady for the time to come. The man who ſtrives for the kingdom of heaven will, beſides, never think that he is good enough; he will be ſtill aſpiring at higher degrees of perfection. Let it not be thought, by the command which is laid upon us to ſtrive after the kingdom of heaven, that it is meant that we ſhould pay no regard to the concerns of this world; on the contrary, God expects from us a diligent performance of our duties towards each other, as well as of our duty to him: now this cannot be done without an attention to worldly concerns. How ſhall a father provide for his family without applying to his particular profeſſion, or working at his particular calling? How ſhall the greater part of mankind get even a ſubſiſtence, if they do not exert themſelves in ſome kind, either of ſtudy or labour? without this, they muſt, generally

generally ſpeaking, either ſtarve, or be a burthen upon their neighbours. How is the earth to be cultivated and its fruits produced, if it were unlawful to attend at all to worldly buſineſs, and what would become of the human race if this were neglected? Beſides, the dangers of idleneſs are great, and it is impoſſible that the immediate duties of religion can take up our whole time; it is therefore as clearly a part of our duty to follow ſome honeſt method of getting a livelihood, and to follow it with diligence, as it is the firſt part to pray to, to praiſe, and to offer up our thanks to God.

But it is time for me to paſs to the third thing I propoſed, which is, to ſhew the weighty motives by which we are urged to be in the number of thoſe that ſtrive. To this a few words will be ſufficient.

Theſe motives are no leſs than the good or bad condition in which we ſhall be, from the time that we die, to all eternity, according as we are among this number, or are not.

The

SERM. II.

The hour is coming, in the which all who are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, that is, they who have ſtrove to gain heaven, unto the reſurrection of life, and they who have done evil, that is, they who have not ſtrove, unto the reſurrection of damnation.

Let us frequently dwell upon this magnificent and awful ſpectacle; let us repreſent to our minds the alarming trumpet of the archangel, by which we ſhall be awakened from our graves, and the ſummons which we ſhall receive to ſtand before the judgement ſeat of Chriſt: let us ſuppoſe him ſeated on a lofty throne, ſurrounded by myriads of angels, and clothed with that ſplendor and majeſty with which he was ſeen by Peter, James, and John, at his transfiguration, and again by thoſe choſen diſciples, who were preſent at his aſcenſion into heaven: let us think of the grand ſcene of all the nations of the earth gathered before him, and the tremendous deciſion about to take place, as to the final

final and everlaſting condition of each individual. Let me appeal to your conſciences, what hopes do they give you? I addreſs myſelf to every one of you here preſent: Has thy conduct been ſuch as to entitle thee to look for that tranſporting ſentence, "Well done thou good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Or haſt thou not reaſon to apprehend the ſound of theſe words (of all that can be uttered the moſt dreadful, "Depart from me thou curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" If thou ſhrinkeſt with terror at this inquiſition; if thou canſt not bear thus to have thy conſcience probed; if thou buoyeſt up thyſelf with ſome ſuch conſolation as this, "though my hopes are nothing now, I intend to repent and live better before I die," alas! how miſerably doſt thou deceive thyſelf! Attend to what I tell thee; almoſt all the wicked, who have gone before thee, comforted themſelves in the ſame falſe manner, but they never thought the hour of reformation arrived; they were ſtill for delaying SERM. II.

SERM. II. laying it yet a little while longer, and were finally cut off with all their imperfections on their head. What groſs folly is this! How ſoon does this world paſs away, and how quickly does even the very remembrance of us periſh; whereas to that which is to come there is no end! Let us think of theſe things; let us recollect that the kingdom of God is not to be got by ſeeking only; and when we remember of what infinite importance it is to us not to come ſhort of it, let us reſolve, and let us be ſteady to our reſolutions, to be in the number of thoſe who ſtrive.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE DANGERS OF RICHES AND POVERTY. AGUR'S PRAYER.

PROVERBS XXX. 8, 9.

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the name of my God in vain!

THIS celebrated prayer of Agur is doubtleſs the dictate of true wiſdom: the experience of all ages has determined that it is the middle ſtation of life which is moſt favourable both to virtue and to happineſs, and conſequently, if we had the power of deciding for ourſelves, it is on this middle ſtate

SERM. III.

ſtate that every prudent man would fix his choice.

But as our conditions are allotted to us by a greater power than we can control, as it is not eaſy for thoſe in the higher ranks to put off their greatneſs, and to deſcend from their elevation; and as it is ſtill more difficult for the lower ranks to aſcend, a great part of mankind muſt neceſſarily paſs their days in one extreme or the other; it may therefore be uſeful for us to enquire what are the principal temptations to vice, to which each are liable; and what the impediments to happineſs, which each throws in our way.

"Give me not riches," ſays Agur in his petition to the Almighty, "leſt abundance incite me to deny thee, and to ſay, who is the Lord? Give me not poverty, leſt I be driven by want to acts of diſhoneſty, and to murmurs againſt thee and thy providence." Agur therefore builds his prayer for mediocrity, on the oppoſite dangers to which riches and poverty are expoſed. I will

will examine into the truth of these dangers, and endeavour to suggest some considerations and arguments which may serve to counteract them. SERM. III.

And first, it is inferred that riches beget self-sufficiency, a fancied independence, and a denial or forgetfulness of God. The inference receives but too much confirmation from experience. The eminence to which the rich man is exalted above his fellows, the obsequiousness and flattery which greatness procures, and the apparent state of independence, which it creates, are dangerous adversaries to virtue: he who imagines that he feels no immediate want of the divine bounty, or of the assistance of his brethren, is too ready to ascribe his prosperity to his own deserts, is too apt to forget, if not to disown his Creator, and to act as if he had no connection at all with his fellow-creature.—"My own "power (will he say in his heart) and the "might of mine own hand have gotten me "this wealth; I am under no obligations

"for

SERM. III.

" for my grandeur to any one; I think " myſelf therefore entirely unaccountable " for my conduct, and ſhall order it alto- " gether according to my own good plea- " ſure." " How hardly (ſays our Saviour) " ſhall they that have riches enter into the " kingdom of God!" He well knew the temptations to which wealth expoſed its poſſeſſors, and the great reſolution which was required to withſtand them.

Nor, to ſpeak in general, are riches leſs prejudicial to happineſs than they are to virtue. If there be any ſuch thing as happineſs in this world, it muſt ariſe from religion, and the exerciſe of the ſocial affections; he therefore, who is entirely abſorbed in ſelf (which the wealthy man too frequently is), who keeps up no intercourſe with his God by prayer and thankſgiving, and enters into no reciprocation of kindneſſes with his fellow-creatures, muſt neceſſarily be unhappy: two of the chief, the eſſential requiſites to felicity, are wanting,

ing, a devout temper and benevolent affec- SERM. III.
tions.

Having explained, thus briefly, the dangers of riches, I now proceed to inquire what are the chief preſervatives againſt them; by what mode of thinking and acting a rich man may be both virtuous and happy. Let him then, in the firſt place, remember that all which he poſſeſſes was *given* to him; that his ſuperiority of ſtation implies no ſuperiority of merit, for that worldly proſperity is diſpenſed indifferently to the wicked and the fooliſh, as well as to the virtuous and the wiſe. (When I ſay that what the rich man poſſeſſes was *given* to him, I expreſs myſelf incautiouſly; it was not *given*, it was only *lent*, and a ſtrict account will one day take place into the manner in which he has made uſe of it; if he has not employed his ſuperfluous wealth to the glory of God, and to the good of men, it will only have ſerved to purchaſe for him the greater condemnation). Let him recollect alſo, that though it may be easier for him to procure it, yet, that in

SERM. III.

fact, he has as much need of the aſſiſtance of the poor man, as the poor man has of his: let him call to mind, that they are both compoſed of the ſame materials; ſubject to the ſame weakneſſes, and infirmities; and are alike haſtening to one common grave: that the diſtinction between them is but momentary; and that death will effectually deſtroy it. Add to this, that the ſame omnipotent hand which has beſtowed riches, can in a moment, by a variety of unforeſeen, and apparently impoſſible ways, withdraw them; the ſame power which has raiſed us to grandeur, can in an inſtant, when all appears outwardly calm and flattering, proſtrate us in the duſt. Of the truth of this, the hiſtory of every age preſents numerous examples, nor are our own times deficient: let us turn our eyes, for a moment, to thoſe bloody ſcenes which have lately been acted, and are ſtill, perhaps, acting in a neighbouring kingdom; how many opulent nobles, whoſe ſituations, not many months ago, promiſed as much ſecurity as this world can afford,

afford, have ſuddenly and miſerably periſh- SERM.
ed? I enter not into the queſtion, whether III.
they have fallen a facrifice to the juſtice, or to the madneſs of the people; I inquire not whether their fate was merited; I only contend that they fell *unexpectedly*; that but a very ſhort time before, they had as much reaſon to plume themſelves on their opulence, and on its ſtability, as any other great man can have; and that they are therefore ſtrong inſtances of the nothingneſs of riches, and the uncertainty of human grandeur.

But ſtill farther; without depriving us of our lives, without taking from us our poſſeſſions, without diveſting us of our outward greatneſs, by the infliction of ſome painful diſeaſe on our bodies, or by the infuſion of ſome corroding anxiety into our minds, God can entirely take from us all enjoyment of the moſt exalted ſituation. If conſiderations of this kind allay the pride and ſelf-ſufficiency of the great man; if they keep awake in him the recollection of his dependance, and incite in his mind a grate-

SERM. III.

ful ſenſe of his Maker's bounty, and an ardent deſire to be ſerviceable to thoſe of the ſame nature with himſelf; and if he act uniformly in conſequence, his riches will indeed be bleſſings; he may then indeed turn them to advantage, and not only enjoy all the happineſs which this world is capable of affording, but will lay up for himſelf, a never-failing ſource of it, everlaſting treaſures in that which is to come.

I am now to ſhew the dangers which are incident to poverty, and to ſuggeſt ſome conſiderations by which they may be avoided. "Give me not poverty, ſays Agur, leſt I ſhould be driven to acts of diſhoneſty, and be tempted to repine and murmur at the diſpenſations of Providence;" for ſuch, in this place, ſeems to be the meaning of taking the name of God in vain. In eſtimating the peculiar and characteriſtic vices of abundance, and of want; thoſe of the former, as I have before obſerved, are ſelf-ſufficiency and preſumption; thoſe of the latter, I am now to ſhew, are diſhoneſty and

diſcontent. God forbid, however, that I ſhould mean to ſay that theſe vices adhere *univerſally* to the poor, any more than that thoſe, in all inſtances, belong to the rich; for if this were the caſe, it were in vain to exhort you to guard againſt them; I only mean that the poor are, from their ſituation, peculiarly liable to temptations to them; that being informed to what attacks they are principally open, they may bend every faculty of their minds to repel them. SERM. III.

It is certain that the life of thoſe in the lowe ranks is ſu ject to many hardſhips and miſeries, from which their more opulent brethren are exempt; they are condemned to be ſpectators of luxuries, which they can never hope to partake; to ſubmit ſometimes to oppreſſions which they cannot reſiſt; to labour inceſſantly to procure a ſcanty pittance, which, in all caſes, is barely ſufficient, and in ſome, totally inſufficient to maintain themſelves and their families: when they aſk themſelves how they came to be ſo unfavourably ſituated, they can give no account

SERM. III.

of it; from their birth they have been doomed to a life of drudgery, before they could poſſibly have done any thing to deſerve it; ſome of them are perhaps conſcious of poſſeſſing virtues and abilities, which might have qualified them to act with applauſe in an higher ſphere, while they perceive, in many inſtances, wealth and greatneſs beſtowed on the fooliſh and wicked. Theſe circumſtances, I ſay, not unnaturally, preſent temptations to diſcontent and diſhoneſty, and too frequently prevail: the lower claſſes of people are too apt to repine and murmur againſt Providence, for having placed them amidſt ſo much wretchedneſs: are too deſirous of improving their condition at the expence of their integrity. I would wiſh then to ſuggeſt ſome arguments, which may operate as preſervatives from theſe two vices. In the firſt place, they are neither of them likely to be of any ſervice; neither of them calculated to anſwer the propoſed end. With reſpect to diſcontent, it always augments the evil with which we

are

are oppreſſed, be it what it will; it adds to it its own bitterneſs, and takes up in an uſeleſs and unavailing manner that time in which we might have learnt to be ſuperior to our afflictions. With reſpect to diſhoneſty, it may indeed afford ſome relief to poverty, but it will be rather in appearance than in effect; at beſt it will only be temporary. What is gained by fraud, is uſually waſted in extravagance; or ſuppoſing it applied to furniſh with neceſſaries the family of the perſon who is guilty of it, the anguiſh of mind, which the recollection of the manner in which it was procured muſt create, will more than outweigh the comfort of the relief. SERM. III.

But this is not all; who ever was known to reſt contented with the commiſſion of one crime? No,—the bounds of integrity being once broken through, and the labyrinths of knavery entered, it is rarely either in our will, or perhaps even in our power, to retreat. When men have once taſted the wages of iniquity, it is ſeldom that they

SERM. III.

will return to honeſt induſtry; they uſually go forward from crime to crime, till detection takes place, their characters are ruined, they draw down on themſelves the vengeance of the laws, and not unfrequently finiſh their career by an untimely and diſgraceful death. And it were well if the matter would end here; but a more ſevere reckoning remains behind! The poor complain, and with ſome *appearance* of juſtice, of the wretchedneſs which they endure on earth; but let them recollect how ſhort their continuance on earth is; that this life is but the beginning of their exiſtence; it is but as a moment, in compariſon of the eternity which is to follow, and yet this moment will have an everlaſting influence on that eternity. Would they wiſh to have their ſufferings perpetuated with an increaſe beyond what they can imagine, or would they exchange them (this tranſitory ſtate ended) for an eternity of bliſs and glory—it depends entirely on themſelves. If they are rebellious againſt their God,

God, which, when they murmur againſt the diſpenſations of his providence, they certainly are; if they are diſhoneſt in their commerce with their fellow-creatures, inſtead of their wretchedneſs, whatever it may be, concluding with their lives, it will be extended, but with inconceivable additions, through endleſs ages: whereas, by conducting themſelves with patience and integrity, death will ſoon come to their relief, put a period to their woes, and they will be recompenſed for all they have undergone, with tranſcendant and unfading happineſs. If then, ye poor! if ye find the evils of this world, which laſt ſo ſhort a time, ſo hard to ſuſtain, ſeek, ſtrive to avoid thoſe which are eternal; if ye feel your hearts pant after terreſtrial, ſhort lived happineſs, exert every effort to ſecure that which is celeſtial and endures for ever! In your thirſt after felicity here, ye may be diſappointed, but your exertions after that which is to come, cannot but be crowned with ſucceſs! SERM. III.

But

SERM. III.

But perhaps the miſeries of the poor are not even here ſo great as they imagine; perhaps there are advantages attached to their ſituation, which beyond all proportion overbalance them.

Human happineſs is in general merely comparative, and it is not ſo much from the evils which *themſelves* feel, that the poor complain of their lot, as from their conceiving that thoſe whom fortune has more highly favoured are more happy.—But in this compariſon they are very often deceived: they ſee generally only the outſide of what belongs to their ſuperiors; the ſplendor of rank, the glitter of riches, fall alone under their obſervation; they are apt to think that where theſe are, all muſt be calm and happy, and ſuſpect not, what is really the caſe, that very frequently under ſuch flattering appearances is concealed an aching heart. Could they follow one of theſe objects of their envy to his retirement, could they penetrate into the boſom of him whom they ſuppoſe to be ſur-

rounded by every thing which conſti- SERM.
tutes felicity, could they view him when III.
all diſguiſe is thrown aſide, they would but too often diſcover how little the gifts of fortune are to be depended on: they would ſee anguiſh more extreme than any which they have ever felt, and diſcover cauſes of vexation which would amaze them by their number and ſtrangeneſs. The truth is, that though the great may be exempt from ſome diſtreſſes which the poor feel, they are ſubject to many others, of which the poor have no idea: as the ſphere of their hopes is larger, ſo is the probability of their diſappointments; as they have more to loſe, their anxieties and terrors are more tormenting; their paſſions rage with greater violence, and they are more haraſſed by that little, which they conceive wanting to their felicity, than their inferiors are from the want of every thing. Ahab, the wealthy, the potent king of Iſrael fell ſick for a garden of herbs; and the Amalekite Haman, who was the favourite of his

SERM. III.

his prince, and the firſt ſubject of a mighty empire, becauſe an obſcure ſtranger refuſed to join with a whole nation in doing him homage, himſelf owned, that all which he poſſeſſed availed him nothing.

But ſuppoſing that the poor were decidedly in this world more miſerable than the rich, and that there really were as much happineſs in grandeur, as there appears outwardly, there is yet an ineſtimable advantage attached to poverty, which would greatly outweigh any temporary inferiority. "Bleſſed," ſays our Saviour, "are the poor, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Before a conſideration of this kind all human griefs fade away; the condition of the lowly renders them more likely to embrace the goſpel, and to live up to its precepts; the occaſions of vice with them are fewer; they have no opportunities of foſtering their ſenſual paſſions by indulgence, they are quite out of the reach of that heinous and moſt unchriſtian vice, pride; they are more peculiarly the objects of God's care and protection.

Let

Let them then, inſtead of grieving, rejoice at their lot, when ſuch important privileges are annexed to it, and let them above all things beware how they ſeek to improve it by a ſacrifice of their integrity; let them learn this wholeſome leſſon from the prayer of Agur, that the two ſins which moſt eaſily beſet them, are diſhoneſty and diſcontent, and let all their efforts be exerted to repel them: in other words, let them learn and labour truly to get their own living, and let them run with patience the race that is ſet before them. SERM. III.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 2.

Thou art about my path and about my bed, and ſpieſt out all my ways.

AMONG the many reaſons which men have to excite them to a life of piety and virtue, there is none which, if duly conſidered, would have more weight with them than the omnipreſence of God. By the omnipreſence of God, I mean that perfection of his, by which he is immediately preſent to every part of the creation, and by conſequence intimately acquainted with every thing, which is going forward,

" If

SERM. IV.

" If we climb up into heaven," ſays the pſalmiſt, " he is there; if we go down " to hell, he is there alſo. If we take the " wings of the morning, and remain in the " uttermoſt parts of the ſea; even there " alſo ſhall his hand lead us, and his right " hand ſhall hold us." By which is meant, that we can go to no place, however high or low, where God does not reſide; we cannot tranſport ourſelves ſo ſwiftly, but that his holy ſpirit will accompany and ſuſtain us; nothing is ſo ſecret, that he does not diſcover it; " he is about our path, and about our " bed, and ſpieth out all our ways;" all our thoughts, words, and actions, are laid open and known to him.

It was the advice of a celebrated heathen moraliſt to his diſciples, always to behave and conduct themſelves, as if ſome eminently virtuous perſon was looking on and obſerving them; as, with ſuch an idea, they would be aſhamed of the commiſſion of any thing which was mean or wicked, and encouraged in the purſuit of whatever was

was honourable and worthy. Now if the bare imagination and faint perſuaſion of the obſervation of a good *man* were expected to have ſo much influence, what may not be looked for from the conſideration of the actual preſence of *God?*—of that Being, before whom the higheſt orders of arch-angels fall down and worſhip, whom no man can ſee, and live!—of that Being, who not only views our actions themſelves, but is intimately acquainted with the motives from which they ſpring!—of that Being, who is holineſs itſelf, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! Surely, if any thing can excite in us awe and reverence, and reſtrain us from the perpetration of wickedneſs, it muſt be an habitual recollection of the preſence of our Creator. SERM. IV.

When we are in company with any perſon, who is greatly our ſuperior in rank, or in wiſdom, and of whoſe integrity and gravity we have an high opinion, it has uſually a great influence on our behaviour: we ſtand in awe, and are afraid to ſin; we take

SERM. IV. care, at leaſt outwardly, to deport ourſelves according to the rules of decency and virtue, and are cautious to do nothing which may render us contemptible or diſagreeable to him. Now if the eye of a fallible man has this reſtraint upon us, how much more ſhould the eye of an all-perfect God! more particularly when we take into conſideration, that God is not an unconcerned or helpleſs ſpectator of human actions, but highly intereſted in them, and fully able to reward or puniſh them. He has ſtrictly forbidden a wicked life, and ſolemnly ſworn that he will ſeverely puniſh it; his own honour therefore ſeems to be concerned in the execution of his threats, and we all know that his power is abſolute and uncontrolable. It often happens that our fellow creature is too indifferent to us to obſerve or regard our conduct; or if he does regard it, it is probable he is too weak to recompenſe it as it deſerves: but it is not ſo with God: he obſerves minutely, he regards deeply, and to his ability to diſtribute exact retri-

retribution, as I before remarked, there is no limit. SERM. IV.

Let the robber, the extortioner, the drunkard, the libertine, the liar, the common ſwearer, think of this; their theſts, their frauds, their riots and intemperance, are all ſeen, their falſities and imprecations are heard, by an obſerving and avenging God: they may poſſibly eſcape the ſight of human eyes, they may poſſibly elude the vigilance of human laws; but to the omnipreſent, all-ſeeing God, their iniquitous practices muſt be manifeſt: nay, he not only ſees their actions, but their firſt thoughts and motions towards them are diſcernable by him: one day all will be laid open to the whole univerſe; we ourſelves ſhall be compelled to give evidence againſt ourſelves, minutely perhaps to recount all our follies and vices, and that before a witneſs and a judge, with whom all diſſimulation will be vain.

How mean a triumph is it, which the ſinner enjoys, while he plumes himſelf on hav-

SERM. IV.

ing committed ſome ſucceſsful wickedneſs undiſcovered, and perhaps unſuſpected by his fellow-mortals! a triumph, which can laſt but for ſo very ſhort a time, and which one day will ſo completely and ſo publicly be overturned. If there were no ſuperior motive to reſtrain a man from living one life in ſecret and another openly, from appearing to his own conſcience what he would die with ſhame to appear to the world, ſurely the reflection, that his hypocriſy will ſooner or later infallibly be diſcovered, ſhould be of itſelf ſufficient!

Every thought and action are known to God—and, at the great day of trial, will be expoſed before men and angels. How then ſhall thoſe good men, whom the ſame integrity which prevented from committing, prevented likewiſe from ſuſpecting evil, and who, for that reaſon, have been the dupes of the diſſembler's crafty devices, then ſcorn and deteſt him!—and how ſhall thoſe, who have been more openly vicious, ſcoff and exult in his detection! The maſk torn from

the

the brow of the hypocrite, and his fraudu- SERM.
lent iniquitous practices laid bare, will af- IV.
ford matter of exultation to the whole univerſe!

As fear is the ſtrongeſt and moſt uncontrolable of all our paſſions, it ſeems little leſs than miraculous that a being ſo weak as man, who cannot but know that God is a ſpectator of all his actions, and that he hath denounced the ſevereſt threatenings againſt him, if the general tendency of them be vicious, it ſeems, I ſay, in the higheſt degree extraordinary that he ſhould ſo far be able to caſt off this fear as to engage in a wicked courſe of life; ſome unaccountable ſupineneſs, ſome fatal inconſideration, conſpire to lull him to deſtruction. But let us awake from this lethargy, let us rouſe ourſelves from this inſenſibility into which we are ſunk:—"it is a fearful thing to fall into the "hands of the living God." Great indeed, and tender are his mercies, but no leſs ſevere and terrible are his judgments: if we continue to deſpiſe the former, which we

SERM. IV. certainly do while we are perpetually violating our Creator's laws before his face, how can we entertain the ſmalleſt hopes of eſcaping from the latter?—" He is not a " God that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, " neither ſhall evil dwell with him. The " fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight; he " hateth all the workers of iniquity."

As this univerſal preſence of God ought to have a great force in deterring us from vice, ſo alſo ſhould it have no leſs in exciting us to virtue: it is uſually a great encouragement to men to acquit themſelves with ability and induſtry, when they know, that thoſe, whom they love or eſteem, are ſpectators of their actions; but how much greater encouragement ſhould they receive from the reflection that the eyes of God himſelf are always upon them. Their fellow creatures may deny their approbation for many reaſons; ſometimes the ſucceſs of an action is not anſwerable to its merit, and in that caſe the judgment of mortals is too frequently guided by the event: ſometimes our

our virtues are not underſtood, ſometimes they are envied, and in all inſtances, if it be from men that we look for recompence, we generally reap nothing but diſappointment. But God regards the principle only; if *that* be good, whether we are ſucceſsful or not, we equally obtain a place in his favour: he fully underſtands every ſpecies of merit, and is moſt pleaſed where he finds it moſt abundant: if we are poor and weak, he looks to our intentions, and if thoſe are pious and benevolent, he will not withhold his applauſe, becauſe our ſituation will not permit us to carry them into action: the ſmalleſt alms given according to our abilities, the moſt hidden charitable wiſh, fervently put up in private for our fellow creatures, attracts his notice, and ſecures his approbation; he ſees them in ſecret, but we may be aſſured that he will reward them openly. What an incitement is it to be virtuous, to know that none, not only of our good actions, but even of our good intentions, ſhall be loſt! that the ſame gra-

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. cious Being is the conſtant ſpectator, the intelligent judge, and will be the liberal rewarder of them!

Beſides this influence on our conduct, which the omnipreſence of God ſhould obtain, beſides exciting us to what is good, and deterring us from what is evil, it ought alſo to have an influence on our *temper*; to prevent us from too ſtrongly dreading the approach, or too inordinately lamenting the oppreſſion, of any calamity or misfortune. If an all-powerful and all-merciful Being has us conſtantly under his eye, we may be aſſured that nothing can happen to us, which is not either good in itſelf, or capable of being converted into good by our own behaviour under it.

Man is a very ſhort-ſighted and feeble creature; he is perpetually ſubject to evils, which he cannot foreſee, or which perhaps, if he could foreſee, he could not avoid; he ought to rejoice therefore, that he has a beneficent and powerful friend, the conſtant ſuperintendant of his concerns, who will never

never fail to order them for the beſt, if his favour is ſought by thoſe eaſy means, which himſelf has appointed. SERM. IV.

Let not then the good man be caſt down, though apparent calamities do befall him; the patience and fortitude, with which he ſubmits to them, the noble efforts to which they may give riſe, the many virtues, for the exerciſe of which they afford opportunity, have a conſtant and accurate witneſs, who is ever at hand to regiſter, and to reward them; who will never ſuffer thoſe who truſt in him, to be oppreſſed beyond their ſtrength, to be tempted above what they are able to bear; who knows the preciſe time, when the aid of his holy ſpirit is moſt neceſſary, and will be moſt efficacious; and when he perceives that from the weakneſs of humanity we are almoſt overpowered, he may, either by infuſing into us new ſtrength, invigorate and revive our drooping ſpirits, or he may by ſome unexpected turn in our concerns do away what oppreſſes us; or, laſtly,

SERM. IV.

laſtly, by a timely death he may ſnatch us from our ſufferings, receive us to himſelf, and recompenſe us for all we have undergone, with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

SERMON

SERMON V.

ON SINS OF OMISSION.

ST. MATTHEW XXV. 30.

Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.

IN that form of confeſſion, which is with great propriety placed at the beginning of our church ſervice, we not only acknowledge that we have done what we ought not to have done, but that we have left undone what we ought to have done. The guilt of a Chriſtian is made up of omiſſions as well as tranſgreſſions of his duty, and perhaps the former with men in general may have the

SERM. V. the greater ſhare in drawing on them God's diſpleaſure.—It is certain that this is the caſe with one very large claſs, who are commonly diſtinguiſhed by the name of good ſort of people: perſons of this deſcription are guilty of no flagrant violations of the laws of God: they are, as far as complying with external forms, religious and devout, they attend regularly at church, they perhaps ſay their prayers morning and evening, they are neither profane nor debauched, they pay to every one their due; and yet, if this is *all* that can be ſaid for them, they are very far removed from the kingdom of heaven.

The promiſes of the goſpel are not dealt out to negative virtue; Chriſtianity requires from its votaries a continued ſeries of poſitive acts of goodneſs. In vain ſhall we plead that we have done no harm, if we are not entitled to ſay that we have done good: we were not ſent into the world to live in idleneſs, and to go out of it in the ſame ſtate in which we entered into it: it is expected from

us

us that we make ourſelves better, that we lay out all the endowments of nature and of fortune to the beſt advantage, that we acquire habits of holineſs and benevolence, which may fit us for that bleſſed ſociety, to which on our ſo doing we may hope to be preferred. SERM. V.

The dangers which ariſe to us from omiſſions of our duties are by ſo much the greater, becauſe in many caſes they are incurred without our being ſenſible of them, and becauſe in almoſt all they are not afterwards remembered.

If I commit a poſitive ſin, if I ſwear, if I am guilty of a falſehood, if I defraud or bear falſe witneſs againſt my neighbour, I know what I am doing at the time, my guilt makes an impreſſion on me, my crime aſſumes a body and a ſhape, I do not eaſily forget it, and conſequently I may repent of it, and avoid being guilty of the like in future.

But when I am only negatively criminal, when I merely omit to perform either my public

SERM. V. public or private devotions to the Almighty, or perform them with careleſſneſs and inattention, when I go on from day to day neglecting to improve my underſtanding, or to render my heart more enlarged, when I take no advantage of the many opportunities, which are preſented to me of being uſeful to my fellow creatures, when I make no progreſs in the attainment of holineſs, and in weaning my affections from the things of this world, my offences, having no immediate tendency to cauſe inconvenience to myſelf or do injury to my neighbour, make no laſting impreſſion on my mind; they are conſequently repeated, not merely without regret, but frequently without notice, and are very ſoon entirely forgotten.

Notwithſtanding this, they muſt certainly be accounted for:—what the world frequently calls a good ſort of perſon, that is, one who neither does harm nor good, who is regular and decent in his conduct, and takes care to do nothing that would bring him under the laſh of the law, or ſubject him

him to any violent cenſure from his neighbours, whoſe piety goes no further than ceremonials, and whoſe benevolence extends not beyond good wiſhes; ſuch an one is repreſented by our Saviour under the character of the ſervant who hid his talent in a napkin.—This ſervant neither diſſipated what was entruſted to him in extravagance, nor loſt it by careleſſneſs, but he neglected to improve it! he did no harm, 'tis true, but he did no good; and therefore the ſentence pronounced againſt him was, "Caſt "ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer "darkneſs, where ſhall be weeping and "gnaſhing of teeth." SERM. V.

The admonitions and threats of the goſpel are chiefly directed againſt people of this claſs: the denunciations of our Saviour are more frequently pointed at the lamp which had no oil, the tree which bore no fruit, and the talent which was not improved, than at bad oil, corrupt fruits, and talents ill-employed.—On the latter, I ſuppoſe, as being more ſelf-evident, it was not ſo neceſſary to

SERM. V. and is ordered to be caſt into outer darkneſs, where ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.

The concluſion of the chapter is a ſort of application of the parable.—It is the remarkable account which our Saviour gives of the day of judgement.—He repreſents himſelf as ſitting upon the throne of his glory with all his holy angels around him, and dividing mankind into two bodies, the virtuous and the wicked, inviting the former to take poſſeſſion of their reward, to ſit down with him in his kingdom, and baniſhing the latter from his preſence and dooming them to everlaſting fire:—that however his juſtice may be manifeſt, he briefly runs over the principal merits and demerits, which will determine him in this diſtribution.

To the virtuous he ſays, "The rewards, which I beſtow on you, are obtained by your many kindneſſes to your brethren; when they were hungry, ye fed them; when they were thirſty, ye gave them drink; when

when they were naked, ye clothed them; when they were ſtrangers, ye hoſpitably received them; when they were ſick and in priſon, ye were attentive and miniſtered to them in their neceſſities."—From this we ſee, that *active benevolence* is the merit, which is attributed to thoſe, whom our Saviour receives into his kingdom.—It was not becauſe they did not injure their fellow-creatures, but becauſe they *exerted* themſelves to be of ſervice to them, that they are rewarded with bliſs and immortality. SERM. V.

On the other hand, the wicked are condemned to everlaſting torments for the omiſſion of thoſe very acts of benevolence, for having done which, the righteous are rewarded with eternal happineſs: they are not in the ſentence paſſed on them charged with having killed, defrauded, or in any ſhape oppreſſed their brethren, but merely with having done them no ſervices.—This alone is looked upon as ſufficient to exclude them from the preſence of God, and deprive them of the enjoyments of heaven.

SERM. V.

Nor indeed could we in reaſon expect it to be otherwiſe. No human accompliſhment, no human poſſeſſion (to ſpeak in general) is attained without pains and labour; ſitting ſtill in indolence, and merely doing nothing to *counteract* their attainment, is not ſufficient; we muſt be aſſiduouſly attentive and actively induſtrious, if we would wiſh to ſucceed.—Surely then we cannot imagine that immortality of bliſs, bliſs ſuch as we can here have no conception of, is to be procured without any efforts, when it requires the greateſt to attain even the paltry acquiſitions of this world.

I ſhall conclude with beſeeching you, that none of you, becauſe ye think ye can do but little, will for that reaſon imagine, that it is unneceſſary to do any thing.—Ye read that of thoſe to whom much is given, much will be required; but can ye ſuppoſe that of him, to whom little is given, there will be required nothing? Far from it.—Expectations are formed of us in proportion to our endowments.—He, who had only two talents,

talents, was not expected to gain five;— you find his reward was allotted him for gaining two, that is, for doing what his abilities permitted him.—In the ſame manner he, who had only one talent, was not expected to gain as much as his fellow ſervants, who had more; nor was he puniſhed for not having done as much as they; but he was puniſhed for having done nothing, for having made no advantage at all of what was intruſted to him. SERM. V.

Let this truth then be deeply engraven on your remembrance, that all men have it in their power to do ſomething for the glory of God, and for the good of their fellow creatures; and that it is not by the doing no harm, by ſitting ſtill in indolence, and fancying that we can do nothing, but by an active exertion of our reſpective abilities that we can alone deſerve and obtain that tranſporting ſentence, "Well done thou good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON VI.

ON THE IMPROPRIETY OF DESERTING WORLDLY DUTIES,

PREACHED IN LENT.

ST. MATTHEW xiii. 23.

Theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

IT has been the great aim of infidelity in all ages to perſuade the credulous and unwary, that religion and preſent intereſt are incompatible; that we cannot at the ſame time apply ourſelves to our callings here and ſecure our happineſs hereafter, but that we muſt of neceſſity ſacrifice either this world or the next. Thoſe who have been

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. deceived by this misrepresentation have, according to their different tempers, chosen two opposite modes of conduct, both very far, though not equally distant, from that which sound reason points out.

They, on whose minds the goodness of God in their creation and redemption, and the immensity of the rewards and punishments held forth in futurity obtained that weight, which in wisdom they ought to obtain, have given up all commerce with this world whatever, have betaken themselves entirely to the exercises of piety, have fled to deserts and to cells, and in the ardour of performing their duty towards God, have entirely neglected that, which is due from them to their neighbour.

They, on the contrary, whose warmer passions, or whose less enlarged understanding chained them down to what was immediately before them, who preferred what was present and visible, to what was invisible and distant, have thought it the most agreeable, if not the most wise, to listen to the solicitations

tations of their ſenſes, and to ſeize the gratifications which were at hand; they have conducted themſelves as if there were no God, no account taken of human actions, no judgment after death, no heaven, no hell, but that this preſent life was the whole of their exiſtence. SERM. VI.

Both theſe deſcriptions of men have, I obſerved, proceeded on a perſuaſion that their temporal and eternal intereſts were at variance; that the one or the other muſt of neceſſity be ſurrendered, and that there was no middle courſe by which they were reconcileable.

I ſhall in this diſcourſe endeavour to point out the falſity and pernicious tendency of this error; I ſhall point out its falſity by ſhewing that a man may work out his ſalvation at the ſame time that he attends to his earthly concerns; and I ſhall expoſe its pernicious tendency, by proving, that to withdraw ourſelves entirely from worldly buſineſs is not only unneceſſary. but criminal; that

SERM. VI. that religion does not only not command ſuch a deſertion, but actually forbids it.

Firſt, then, I am to ſhew that a man may work out his ſalvation at the ſame time that he attends to his earthly concerns.

Thoſe who maintain the contrary, ground probably their opinion on the following precepts of our Saviour, and other of the like import: "Take no thought for your life, "what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; "nor yet for your body, what ye ſhall put "on." Here, ſay they, our Saviour ſeems to forbid all care, even about the neceſſaries of life, meat, drink, and clothing; much more about the conveniencies and delights of it. In the ſame chapter, he ſays, "Be-"hold the fowls of the air: they ſow not, "neither do they reap, nor gather into "barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth "them;" and again, "Conſider the lilies "of the field how they grow, they toil not "neither do they ſpin." Here it ſeems to be intimated that we ought to depend on the providence of God for food and raiment, and

and to uſe no more induſtry for obtaining them than the fowls or the lilies do. There are various other texts of this kind, all of which there are two ways of explaining, and either is ſufficient to overturn the concluſion drawn from them, that worldly employments and religion are incompatible. One explanation is, that our Saviour does not mean to condemn all care whatever about the things of this life, but only that ſort of care which is accompanied with anxiety and diſtruſt; that he does not intend to decry every kind of diligence and induſtry with regard to our earthly concerns, but only ſuch degrees of them as would take off, or too much withdraw, our attention from the duties of religion. The other explanation, which is moſt probably the true one, is, that theſe commands were not deſigned to be general and ſtanding laws, but were only addreſſed to, and intended for the practice of the firſt diſciples; for it was neceſſary that they ſhould always be attendant on our Saviour to be witneſſes of his miracles, and hearers

SERM. VI. hearers of his doctrines; and in thoſe in particular who were to preach the goſpel after his reſurrection, a peculiar degree of contempt of the world, and diſintereſtedneſs, was requiſite; ſince they muſt of courſe quit their homes, give up what proſpects they had of advancing their fortunes, and expoſe themſelves to perſecutions and deaths of every kind.

An entire freedom from care and concern with regard to temporal comforts was abſolutely requiſite in theſe; but that it is not ſo in all men, is very evident from various paſſages in the goſpel. When the forerunner of our Saviour, John the Baptiſt, was aſked by the publicans and ſoldiers what they ſhould do, what conduct he would preſcribe to them to fit them for the coming of the Meſſiah; to the former he ſays, "Exact no more, than that which is ap-"pointed you;" to the latter, "Do violence "to no man, neither accuſe any falſely, and "be content with your wages." No mention, you ſee, of relinquiſhing their profeſſions,

ſions, which there certainly would have been had it been neceſſary; for John was ſent for the expreſs purpoſe of preparing the way for the preaching of the goſpel. Nor is the counſel of Chriſt himſelf on a ſimilar occaſion different: on his being aſked by a certain lawyer what he ſhould do to inherit eternal life? he replies unto him, "What "is written in the law? how readeſt thou?" And the lawyer anſwering ſaid, "Thou "ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy "heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all "thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind, and "thy neighbour as thyſelf:" And Jeſus ſaid unto him, "thou haſt anſwered right, "this do, and thou ſhalt live." No injunction, you ſee, to forſake the world, or to give up his buſineſs; nor is ſuch meaning fairly to be drawn from any other of our Lord's diſcourſes. SERM. VI.

His advice to the rich young man to ſell all that he had, and to give to the poor, is certainly much overſtrained by thoſe who would ſuppoſe it binding on Chriſtians in

SERM. VI.

general; it was probably meant as a trial of the ſincerity of the perſon to whom it was addreſſed, and certainly extends not beyond them to whom our Lord may have directly enjoined it. It ſeems to be intimated, indeed, though even this has been otherwiſe explained, that many of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity parted with all that they had, laid the money at the apoſtles' feet, and lived together on a common ſtock; but it is probable that they ſtill continued to employ themſelves in their ſeveral trades and profeſſions. Nor was there any obligation upon them to this communion of goods, as St. Peter expreſsly aſſerts in the caſe of Ananias and Sapphira; nay, among thoſe, who were firſt called, there are ſeveral inſtances to the contrary, inſtances of opulent perſons and in high civil and military employments, who neither diveſted themſelves of their riches, nor forſook their occupations. They are charged indeed, to be ready to give, and willing to communicate, which they doubtleſs were; but neither did they look on them-

themſelves as bound, nor did the apoſtle re- SERM.
quire of them, when they adopted the cha- VI.
racter of Chriſtians, to deſert their duty as men. Chriſtianity with reſpect to the civil relations of men to each other, and their ſecular employments, ſeems to have left the world entirely as ſhe found it; ſhe inſiſts indeed on a faithful diſcharge of the duties of our ſtation, whatever it may be, but nowhere commands that the ſtation itſelf ſhould be deſerted: the prince is not enjoined to deſcend from his throne, nor the ſubject to throw off his allegiance; the maſter is not required to diſmiſs his ſervant, nor the ſervant to forſake his maſter, neither is there any precept to the man of buſineſs to relinquiſh his occupation.

Chriſtianity inculcates no virtue, which may not be practiſed in the moſt eminent degree amidſt ſociety and worldly employment; while there are Chriſtian duties which in retirement and ſecluſion can ſcarce be practiſed at all, or at beſt but imperfectly.

And

SERM. VI.

And this brings me to what I propoſed in the ſecond place, to ſhew the pernicious tendency of the notion that religion and worldly occupation are irreconcileable.—There needs no proof of its deſtructive effect upon thoſe who are driven by it to give themſelves up entirely to this preſent life, and to throw off all thoughts about the next; but I will take the inſtance of thoſe who make choice of the moſt favourable ſide of the alternative, and in their deſire to attain the things above, altogether renounce the things on earth. I aſſert then, that ſuch a renunciation, ſo far from being neceſſary, is criminal, and that religion does not only not command, but actually diſapproves it. At the head of the Chriſtian graces ſtands benevolence; to do all the good we poſſibly can to our fellow-creatures, is our bounden and indiſpenſable duty; now he who ſecludes himſelf from the world, can obſerve this but very imperfectly: taking no meaſures to advance his fortune, his bounties to the indigent will be narrowed and confined;

fined; not improving his intereſt, he will be the leſs able to countenance merit or ſuccour diſtreſs; and in vain do his friends have recourſe to *him* for advice, whom ſolitude has prevented from the acquiſition of experience. SERM. VI.

I do not ſay that he will be unable or unwilling to exerciſe thoſe duties at all, but certainly in no comparable degree to what he might have done, if idleneſs or ſuperſtition had not driven him to ſecluſion. The caſe of that ſervant who wrapped his talent in a napkin, and applied himſelf to no means of improving it, is preciſely the ſame with his who withdraws from all the duties of active life; and it behoves us to remember the ſentence that his lord paſſes upon him, "Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer "darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and "gnaſhing of teeth."

The world is the nobleſt theatre of action; it is there only that our talents can be applied to the greateſt advantage, and our virtues exerciſed with the moſt diffuſive utility. It is not meant by this, that he

SERM. VI. who finds himſelf placed in a private ſituation ſhould endeavour to exchange it for one which is more public; by no means! it is only meant that whatever a man's rank and ſtation in life may be, he ought not to deſert the duties of it; nor think to atone by piety towards his Creator, for the neglect of doing all poſſible good to his fellow creatures.

To keep ourſelves unſpotted from ſin, is one motive of retiring from ſociety, but it has not in general been found that the experiment has ſucceeded. We may quit the buſineſs of the world, without diveſting ourſelves of its vices; the exerciſes of piety cannot fill up our whole time, and the dangers of idleneſs are great! From ſome temptations to ſin perhaps ſolitude may exempt us, but at the ſame time it excludes us from many encouragements to virtue: if we eſcape the contagion of bad, we miſs likewiſe the influence of good example.

Beſides, one who fancies himſelf out of the reach of danger, as the retired man is apt

apt to do, gives himſelf up to ſecurity; SERM. VI.
and too frequently loſes his integrity, from being unapprehenſive of an attack; while the vigilance of him who lives ſurrounded by temptation, is quickened by a ſenſe of his peril; he ſees the enemy always at hand, and therefore is always prepared to withſtand him. Upon the whole then I conclude, that worldly employment and true religion may eaſily ſubſiſt together, and not only ſo, but that a life of activity and buſineſs is more favourable to virtue, and perhaps leſs liable to vice, than a life of ſolitude and ſecluſion. We muſt however take care that worldly hopes and fears do not gain the aſcendancy in our minds; we may purſue with diligence, and enjoy with moderation, the happineſs which this world can beſtow, where it does not interfere with our ſpiritual concerns; but where it does, it muſt, without a moment's heſitation, give place. Earthly occupations may engage, but they muſt not engroſs our thoughts; they may have a ſhare in our hearts, but let us not for-

SERM. VI.

get that our well-being through eternity demands that it ſhould be a ſubordinate ſhare only. There are likewiſe times when temporary retirement from the world will be extremely ſalutary, that we may review our paſt lives, and form reſolutions for our future conduct; and the preſent approaching ſeaſon of the ſufferings and death of our bleſſed Saviour, which Chriſtians of all ages ſeem to have dedicated to ſuch purpoſes, appears to be peculiarly proper; but as much may be ſaid on this ſubject, I ſhall reſerve it for a future diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

ON THE NECESSITY OF TEMPORARY RETIREMENT AND ABSTRACTION.

PREACHED IN LENT.

PSALM iv. 4.

Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be ſtill.

IN a late diſcourſe I endeavoured to ſhew the falſity and hurtful tendency of the notion, that religion and worldly buſineſs could not ſubſiſt together. I deſcribed to you the pernicious effects which this notion had on thoſe who gave credit to it; that it had driven ſome to give themſelves up entirely to the affairs of this world, while it had

SERM. VII. induced others altogether to forſake them; that the former had lived as if they were totally unconnected with God; the latter, as if they had nothing at all to do with mankind. The conduct of both of theſe, I obſerved, was far different from what ſound reaſon pointed out; that the man who gave himſelf up to this world without any idea of another, certainly drew on himſelf everlaſting puniſhment in the life to come, whilſt he who, in the ardour of piety, was entirely unmindful of what he owed to his fellow-creatures, debarred himſelf from exerciſing any Chriſtian virtues at all, and could practiſe others but very imperfectly.

I concluded, on the whole, that a due attention to our earthly concerns, and the attainment of the kingdom of heaven, were very reconcileable, and that perfection of character conſiſted in a diligent diſcharge of our various duties, as men, no leſs than as Chriſtians. I cautioned you, however, againſt permitting worldly affairs to gain the aſcendancy in your hearts; I told you that they

they might engage, but not engroſs, your affections; and that whenever you found your temporal and eternal intereſt at variance, the former muſt, without a moment's heſitation, give place to the latter. I added likewiſe, that in cenſuring a deſertion of the duties of this world, I was not to be underſtood as ſpeaking of a temporary retirement from it; that there were times when this was not only ſalutary, but abſolutely requiſite; that the approaching ſeaſon of the ſufferings and death of our Redeemer had been particularly dedicated by the primitive Chriſtians to ſuch purpoſes, and therefore was peculiarly proper; and it was on this ſubject of temporary retirement that I engaged to ſpeak more at large. SERM. VII.

I propoſe, on the preſent occaſion, to fulfil this promiſe by pointing out the employment which ſhould engage us in our retirements, and the advantages which may be expected to ariſe from them.

But here I muſt premiſe, that though retirement be neceſſary for all men in ſome de-

SERM. VII.

gree, the length of it muſt be determined in a great meaſure by a man's ſituation in life; ſome may dedicate weeks, ſome days, and ſome perhaps only hours to it: but all may ſpend ſome portion of their time in ſolitude and conſideration, and ſome gain will accrue even from the leaſt time thus ſpent.

The employment, then, of our retirement ſhould be, meditation on our condition as created, accountable beings, on our paſt life, and on our future proſpects; reflection on the manner in which we have diſcharged our duty towards God, and our neighbour, with the hope which our behaviour may promiſe us of the approbation of our Maker, and eternal happineſs after death.

Let not thoſe who already know how to conduct this ſelf-examination be wearied, while I point out to them, who are not ſo well inſtructed, ſome few queſtions to put to themſelves: it is my duty to attend to the neceſſities of all.

When, then, you have retired for the ſalutary purpoſe of ſelf-examination, let your thoughts and enquiries be of this kind:

I find

I find myſelf placed in a buſy world, to which my wants and deſires are continually drawing my attention; its cares or its pleaſures require ſo much of my time, that perhaps I have ſcarcely yet found leiſure to aſk myſelf how long I am likely to continue in the ſame ſtate, and what is to become of me when I go into another. Let me then aſk it now, and aſk it ſeriouſly, Am I to continue here for ever? and if not, what is to be my condition when I go from hence? With reſpect to the firſt queſtion, both experience and ſcripture will tell me, "that "man that is born of a woman has but a "ſhort time to live," that three ſcore or four ſcore years at moſt are the days of his pilgrimage, but that he may, and probably will, be cut off much ſooner: let me think how many of thoſe who ſet out with me in life are already ſilent in the grave, and let me not preſume on the continuance of that breath, of which the next moment may deprive me, which, when I recollect how many of my companions have gone before SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. fore me, it is a ſubject of wonder that I have enjoyed ſo long. This life, then, I cannot but allow is uncertain; it may be put an end to immediately, and at all events will not be very laſting. What then follows? Shall that ſtroke, which reduces my body to the duſt whence it originally ſprung, put an entire period to my exiſtence? Muſt I bid an eternal adieu to that being and thoſe faculties which I received from my Maker? Have I been ſo far raiſed above the beaſts of the field in life, only to be levelled with them in death? Both reaſon and the Bible join to aſſure me, that this will not be the caſe; that in leaving this world, I only change, do not part from, my exiſtence; and though after my fleſh, worms may deſtroy my body, yet that it will be raiſed again at a certain time, and re-united to my ſoul, and I ſhall live. But what then, ſhall I be happy, or ſhall I be miſerable? This, the ſcriptures tell me, depends altogether on myſelf; my behaviour now, while I am in this world, will determine it; if that be conducted

ducted according to the will of my Maker, I ſhall be beyond my utmoſt conception happy; but if on the contrary, I am wicked and rebellious to his laws, I ſhall be in an equal degree miſerable; and what adds to this, and makes it tremendouſly important, is, that my ſtate in the world to come will not be brought to an end, as it is here, but ſuch as it ſhall be at firſt, ſo will it remain for ever and ever. SERM. VII.

Having thought ſeriouſly on this ſubject, and brought it thoroughly home to you, you will each of you naturally proceed to aſk yourſelf, To which of theſe ſtates do my actions entitle me? Have they been ſuch as to give me ſufficient cauſe to flatter myſelf with the hope of obtaining the rewards of my Creator, or have they been ſuch, that my conſcience tells me I can look for nothing but his vengeance? In the firſt place, how have I behaved myſelf with reſpect to him? have I frequently thought with gratitude of his having firſt created, and ſince preſerved me; of his having ſent his only begotten

SERM. VII. begotten Son to teach me what I ought to do to pleaſe him, and to gain everlaſting life, and of that ſame Son having ſubmitted to a moſt painful and ignominious death to atone for my imperfect obedience, and to ſave me from the conſequences of my ſins? Have I given him repeated thanks for theſe inſtances of his goodneſs, both in public and in private? Have I not ſuffered myſelf to be deterred from theſe duties by idle and feigned excuſes; or if I have been regular and conſtant in the performance of them, have I been attentive, ſerious, and hearty? Have I beſides prayed to God, for the pardon of my faults, and the ſupply of my wants? have I had a zeal for his honour? do I never take his holy name in vain? never brave and affront him by lies and equivocations, and do I both by advice and example endeavour to promote the practice of piety and virtue, and to diſcourage that of wickedneſs and irreligion? As to my fellow-creatures, how has been my conduct with regard to them? Have I, as our Saviour commands,

commands, done unto them, as I would wiſh them to do unto me? Have I been true and juſt in all my dealings? Have I been as careful not to defraud others, as to prevent myſelf from being defrauded? Have I not availed myſelf of ſuperior wealth to oppreſs thoſe beneath me in ſtation, or ſuperior cunning to over-reach thoſe beneath me in worldly wiſdom? If I am a father, am I careful that my children are virtuouſly educated, and as well as my ſituation will admit? If I am a ſon, am I dutiful and affectionate to my parents? As a maſter of a family, do I ſet my dependants a good example, and am I as gentle and conſiderate as our common relationſhip to each other demands? As a ſervant, am I faithful, obedient and reſpectful? If I am in good circumſtances, am I compaſſionate and charitable to my poor brethren? If I am indigent, am I humble and lowly to my ſuperiors, receiving their bounty with gratitude, and not envying or repining at their ſeemingly greater happineſs? The time would fail me if I were to

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. to go over all the different queſtions comprized in ſelf-examination, which it is our duty to put to ourſelves in our hours of retirement: conſcience will ſuggeſt the greater part of them, and the frequent reading of the holy ſcriptures will very much aſſiſt you, for in them are enumerated all our virtues and vices, and there you will find preciſely marked out both what God commands, and what he forbids. Let me then preſs upon you a diligent and frequent peruſal of this good book, and more particularly of the four goſpels contained in the New Teſtament. Each of thoſe, you know, is a ſhort life of our Saviour, written by different perſons, and moſt parts of them ſo plainly written, that none can miſunderſtand them: there you will find both what our Saviour did, and what he taught; and from comparing his example and his inſtructions with your own practice, you will eaſily diſcover what manner of men ye are; how far ye have deviated from the great ſtandard of perfection, or how cloſely you have adhered to it—in a word,

word, what are your hopes of attaining heaven, or what reaſon you have to apprehend an eternity of ſhame and puniſhment. SERM. VII.

They who can in a ſatisfactory manner go through this important trial, whoſe own hearts, on an impartial and honeſt ſcrutiny, bid them confidently rely on their innocence, from the infinite pleaſure which ſelf-examination will give them, need little perſuaſion frequently to have recourſe to it: while they on the other hand, who never look into themſelves but with ſhame, anguiſh, and terror, are too likely to avoid every ſtep which may lead to it, are too likely to fly from ſolitude and reflection, and drown the remonſtrances of conſcience in noiſe, hurry, and diſſipation.

But alas! what do they gain by this? a little preſent eaſe dearly bought with laſting woe; a moment's reſpite from the anticipation of miſery, purchaſed with the actual endurance of it to all eternity. By thus flying the inſpection of their hearts, and the conſideration of their ways, they ſhut up

SERM. VII. every avenue to reformation, they effectually and voluntarily cloſe againſt themſelves the gate of everlaſting life.

It is ſtrange that men ſhould be ſo inattentive and negligent of their eternal happineſs, when in general they are ſo extremely provident and careful of their temporal intereſt.

To promote the latter they will riſe up early, and late take reſt, and eat the bread of carefulneſs; no toils are thought too hard to undergo, no dangers too formidable to brave with a proſpect of its advancement, while to the former they frequently refuſe the equitable chance of even a few hours conſideration. For ſurely if after death there be a ſtate which is to laſt for ever; and if our condition in that ſtate will depend entirely on our conduct now, nothing but conſideration can be wanting to rational creatures, to induce them to purſue that which may render them as happy as poſſible. Conſideration may indeed at firſt be the cauſe of great anguiſh and horror to the guilty perſon;

perſon; and this may tempt and unfortu- SERM.
nately prevail on him to endeavour to drive VII.
it from him, yet let him recollect, that
though he may poſtpone, he cannot finally
eſcape it. Calamity, ſickneſs, or approach-
ing diſſolution, will force it upon him, and
with pangs proportionably increaſed from
their having been ſo long kept off; and
alas! conſideration will then too probably
do him little good.

When we have cunningly contrived to rob God of the ſervice of the beſt part of our lives, have anxiouſly laboured to expel all thoughts of him from our minds, can we expect that he will take up with a few unprofitable ſighs and prayers, which terror alone has drawn from us, and which we are no longer able to avoid? "Long have ye ſet at nought (may he ſay) my counſel, and hearkened not to my reproof: therefore I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs

SERM. VII. and anguiſh cometh upon you; then ye ſhall call upon me, but I will not anſwer; ye ſhall ſeek me early, but ye ſhall not find me: for ye hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord!"—Oh then let us be wiſe in time, and conſider theſe things *now* to our eternal peace and comfort; let us think of them while we may redreſs them; while we have it yet in our power let us make haſte to enter into the paths of the Lord!

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE EFFICACY OF REPENTANCE.

ST. LUKE xv. 7.

I ſay unto you, that likewiſe joy ſhall be in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons which need no repentance.

OF all the diſcoveries which we derive from the ſcriptures, there is none which is capable of affording us greater comfort and ſatisfaction, than the aſſurance which they give us of forgiveneſs of ſins on repentance. It is not to be denied that the ſyſtem of morality laid down in the goſpel is very difficult to be obſerved: our nature

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII.

is frail, our paſſions are violent, and the temptations with which we are ſurrounded very alluring; ſo that notwithſtanding all our care and all our firmneſs, the beſt of us are frequently drawn aſide from our duty: and unſinning obedience is what none of us arrive at; "the fleſh conſtantly luſteth againſt the ſpirit; in many things we offend all, and yet there is no precept more conſtantly inſiſted on by Chriſt and his apoſtles than "be ye perfect." Into what a ſtate then of deſpondence ſhould we be thrown, if we believed that every ſin was unpardonable! acquainted as we are with our duty, conſcious as we muſt be of our frequent deviations from it, and knowing the wrath and terrors of the Lord revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs, how wide would be the reign of deſpair, if God Almighty, out of his great goodneſs, had not ſolemnly engaged to forgive our tranſgreſſions on our ſorrow and amendment; if we had reaſon to believe that the governor of the univerſe was inexorable, that

SERM. VIII.

that once offended, he would never be appeaſed, there would be nothing left to ſtop us in the career of vice: all hope being baniſhed, there would be no room for endeavour; the progreſs of life would be the natural deſcent of negligent deſpair from crime to crime; our firſt wiſh would be to withdraw our thoughts from our Creator, and our firſt happineſs to ſtifle all reflection whatever. But far otherwiſe is the caſe: not only he who is ſurpriſed by ignorance, by negligence, or by paſſion, into the commiſſion of accidental guilt, but even the more hardened ſinner may be ſure of meeting with favour, if he will but once embrace the means which are appointed for the obtaining it; the road to mercy and ſalvation is acceſſible to all, however profligate and abandoned we may have been, if we are ſincerely afflicted at the remembrance of our wickedneſs, firmly reſolve to forſake it, and prove our ſincerity by the immediate amendment of our lives: "though our ſins were as ſcarlet, they

SERM. VIII. ſhall be white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool."

What a great proof is this of the infinite goodneſs of the Almighty, what a conſolation to thoſe who are oppreſſed by the conſciouſneſs of their iniquities, what an argument to perſuade them to repent and reform, when by ſo doing, all in which they have offended ſhall be blotted out, and no more remembered againſt them. It would be no ſmall encouragement to the ſinner, in his advances towards virtue, if he only believed that by forſaking his evil ways, he ſhould eſcape the condemnation which is denounced againſt thoſe who are impenitently wicked; but the mercy which is offered him is much ſuperior to this: he is aſſured, that if with ſincerity and earneſtneſs he laments and avoids his former tranſgreſſions, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall not only reſcue himſelf from perdition, but will have a claim, and perhaps an equal claim, to thoſe rewards which his bounteous Creator has prepared for them who love him.

Among

Among the Jewiſh teachers there were ſome very forcible ſayings as to the power and efficacy of repentance: "Great is the "dignity of penitents, great is the virtue "of them that repent, ſo that no creature "may ſtand in their rank and order;" and again, "the righteous may not ſtand "in the ſame place with thoſe who re-"pent." Theſe are high ſayings, and muſt certainly be underſtood with allowance, and yet they ſeem countenanced in a degree by ſome paſſages in ſcripture. In the chapter of St. Luke, from which I took my text, are three remarkable parables: they were ſpoken by our Saviour on his being reproached by the ſcribes and phariſees for his conſorting with publicans and ſinners. The firſt and ſecond are exactly of the ſame nature, the third is the much celebrated one of the prodigal ſon; the deſign of them all is to ſet forth the value of repentance. The firſt of them runs thus: "What man of you, having "an hundred ſheep, if he loſe one of them,

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII.

" doth not leave the ninety and nine in the " wilderneſs, and go after that which is " loſt, until he find it. And when he hath " found it, he layeth it on his ſhoulders " rejoicing. And when he cometh home, " he calleth together his friends and neigh- " bours, ſaying unto them, Rejoice with " me, for I have found my ſheep which " was loſt." What is our Lord's application? " I ſay unto you, that likewiſe " joy ſhall be in heaven over one ſinner " that repenteth, more than over ninety " and nine juſt perſons that need no re- " pentance." Nothing can poſſibly ſet the dignity of repentance higher: the Almighty himſelf perhaps, and certainly the heavenly hoſt, are repreſented as receiving an increaſe of happineſs from the reformation of a ſinner; nay, it is mentioned as giving them higher ſatisfaction than the continuance of ninety and nine perſons in a ſtate of uninterrupted righteouſneſs.— How are we to account for this? Is there not ſomething in it very ſtrange, and almoſt

almoſt contradictory? What! is it not better to have been engaged in ſuch a courſe of action as to preclude the neceſſity of a change; to have done nothing which requires ſorrow, ſo to have lived as to have no need of repentance? Is not prevention better than remedy; or are we to ſin, that grace may abound? God forbid! The great hazard of our being ſo enamoured of our vices as never to be willing to forſake them, or of our being cut off in the midſt of them, and ſo prevented from being able, is alone ſufficient to deter a rational being from acting on this concluſion. SERM. VIII.

But yet repentance appears to be preferred before conſtant righteouſneſs.

If this really be the meaning of this paſſage, it perhaps may be accounted for in the following manner:

By the ninety and nine juſt perſons mentioned in the text, we are not to underſtand perſons abſolutely and unexceptionably virtuous, but perſons who poſſeſs that degree of limited virtue, which falls to the ſhare

SERM. VIII.

ſhare of fallible men; perſons who have their imperfections and frailties, but who yet live ſo in the main as to be under no neceſſity of altering the whole courſe of their lives, and ſo may be ſaid to need no repentance. Now to theſe the ſincere penitent may poſſibly be ſuperior; he *may*, I ſay, for it becomes us to ſpeak with diffidence: for firſt, if the value of virtue be in proportion to the difficulty of practiſing it, it is certainly much more difficult to ſtop in the career of vice, and to turn to what is lawful and right, than to perſevere in the ſame good courſe, in which we have been always engaged. The ſingle effort, by which we recover ourſelves from the downhill road to perdition, requires a greater ſhare of reſolution than an hundred acts of habitual virtue. Add to this, that penitents are uſually much more zealous in the practice of religion, much more ſtrict in their integrity, than thoſe who have never groſsly offended: their trouble and remorſe for their ſins ſpur them on in the ways

ways of goodneſs and piety, and a lively ſenſe of their paſt errors makes them more fearful of diſpleaſing God, and very anxiouſly deſirous to atone for their former deficiency by ſuperior preſent exactneſs. Their affection to their Maker is uſually more vehement, and burns with a brighter flame; they have not only the ſame cauſes with others to adore and to love him, but this additional one, that he moſt kindly gave them time and inclination to ſee the folly and danger of their evil ways; that he did not cut them off in their ſins, but by the ſuggeſtions of his holy ſpirit, has brought them within view of heaven and happineſs. "To whomſoever much is for-"given, the ſame will love much." Penitents likewiſe are in general more eager for the converſion of others, from a deep ſenſe of what was once the danger of their own ſtate: they have alſo leſs pride, from the recollection of what themſelves formerly were, and are more compaſſionate and charitable to the vices and follies of their neighbour. SERM. VIII.

So

SERM. VIII.

So that ſinners do certainly very often, when they have once repented, arrive at a greater degree of perfection, than thoſe who have been always trained and accuſtomed to a good life.

If however it ſhould ſtill be thought, that* the higheſt manſions in heaven will be reſerved for thoſe who have never departed either very long, or very far from their obedience, ſtill it muſt be allowed that the efficacy of repentance is very great: it gives joy to the inhabitants of heaven, redeems the penitent from deſtruction, and entitles him, if not to the very higheſt, yet certainly to a diſtinguiſhed ſituation in the kingdom of God.

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe by tracing out the uſual progreſs of repentance, and the marks by which it may be diſcerned, whether it be a repentance unto ſalvation. The firſt and main ſtep in this rugged road,

* See Dr. Powell, towards the concluſion of his Sermon on the Prodigal Son.

is,

SERM. VIII.

is, conſideration; and that, once properly uſed, all the reſt follows of courſe. For ſurely it is impoſſible for the ſinner to reflect ſeriouſly on his degraded and perilous ſituation, on the ingratitude which he has committed againſt God, who has laid all poſſible obligations upon him, on the folly which he hath been guilty of towards himſelf in forfeiting his title to eternal bliſs and glory, and on the danger to which he has ſubjected himſelf on everlaſting perdition; that there is but one ſtep between him and death, and not another between that and hell, ſurely it is impoſſible for him to lay theſe thoughts ſeriouſly to heart, without being deeply concerned that he has acted ſo abſurdly and criminally, or without wiſhing moſt devoutly that he had done otherwiſe. Hence ariſes ſorrow for his ſins paſt, which is the main ingredient in repentance; for a deſire and reſolution to avoid the like vicious courſes in future naturally and uſually follow. So far repentance is produced by fear; but now a nobler

SERM. VIII.

nobler motive will begin to operate. Our evil ways being relinquiſhed, the tranſition is eaſy, and almoſt unavoidable, to a life of piety and virtue; and that once begun, the hope of pleaſing our Maker and attaining the glorious rewards, which he hath promiſed, will ſoon predominate. The dread of puniſhment may deter us from relapſing into groſs wickedneſs, but it muſt be the deſire of gaining the approbation of our Creator, and becoming partakers of his heavenly promiſes, which can alone excite us to any ſublime height of virtue. Repentance, we ſee, begins with conſideration, from whence reſults ſorrow for ſins paſt; this ſorrow produces a reſolution to avoid the like in future, which is the beginning of reformation; and that once entered upon, and the proſpects of eternal bliſs, and glory opening upon us and animating our exertions, there is no degree of perfection at which we may not arrive, and probably no manſions in heaven which we may not attain. A true penitent then is one, who

is

is thoroughly convinced of the folly, baſeneſs, and ingratitude of ſin; who has forſaken it, from the danger to which it expoſed him, and who has embraced a life of holineſs, from the hopes of pleaſing his Maker, and attaining his gracious promiſes. He never looks back to his paſt life without ſhame and ſelf-abhorrence, and is particularly cautious not to call to mind his former vicious pleaſures, except to quicken his ſorrow and contrition, and to beg mercy of God for having been guilty of them. Reflecting on the injury which he may have done by his former bad example, he is deſirous that his converſion may be open and manifeſt, and that he may become an eminent pattern of what is juſt and worthy; as he was formerly the cauſe of reflections on his profeſſion of a Chriſtian, he will be careful that thoſe who were once ſcandalized by his vices, may now be edified by his virtues; he will make his light ſhine before men, that they may ſee his good works and glorify, on his account, his Father which is in heaven. SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. heaven. If he has wronged any one, he will be rigorouſly exact in making reſtitution; for it is impoſſible he ſhould be in earneſt in his reformation, if he continues to enjoy or retain the acquiſitions of ſin.

Laſtly, he will ſcrupulouſly avoid thoſe companions and thoſe ſituations, by which he knows himſelf liable to be drawn into vice; a relapſe may otherwiſe be the conſequence, and his raſhneſs in hazarding it may provoke God entirely to withdraw from him his holy ſpirit, and ſo his laſt ſtate may be worſe than his firſt. Let not however the penitent be diſcouraged by unpremeditated and unintentional lapſes, at his firſt entrance into repentance; let him not provoke them, but let him not deſpair, if he ſhould occaſionally fall into them. It requires uncommon firmneſs, and it is indeed almoſt impoſſible to arrive at once, after a long courſe of ſinning, at perfect obedience. But let him perſevere in his exertions, and he will riſe ſuperior to his falls; he will grow by degrees more and more

more firm, will be continually making new acceſſions in holineſs, till at length he is freed from this life of probation by death, and will attain that ſtate where there is aſſurance of righteouſneſs and happineſs for evermore. SERM. VIII.

SERMON IX.

ON CONTENTMENT.

PHIL. iv. 11.

I have learned in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content.

IN all ſituations of life, diſcontent is very unreaſonable; happineſs is dealt out to mankind with a juſt hand; and though the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, are ſubject each of them to particular evils, from which they ſee others perhaps exempt, yet, if they would view the matter impartially, they would perceive that they are made amends for theſe evils by particular advantages

SERM. IX. which others do not enjoy. Diſcontent is, notwithſtanding, very univerſal, and the poor in particular, by which I mean the labouring part of mankind, are apt to think that *they* complain with the greateſt reaſon, and their murmurs, if not the deepeſt, are at leaſt the loudeſt, and the moſt known.

Of theſe there are ſome who are ſo abſurd as to think it unjuſt that there ſhould be any ſuch thing as inequality among mankind; there are others who ſee the impoſſibility of all being equal, yet think it an hardſhip that it ſhould fall to their lot to be at the bottom of the ſcale; while a third ſet look on the evils of poverty as ſo intolerable, that they would be willing to hazard a general confuſion of their country for the hopes of improving their condition.

I hope, in this diſcourſe, to ſhew the folly and injuſtice of theſe ways of thinking, by proving,

Firſt, that it is a thing impoſſible that inequality of rank and riches ſhould not prevail,

prevail, and that this being the caſe it is no more an hardſhip on one man to be low and poor than it would have been upon another. SERM. IX.

Secondly, that the poor are free from many evils which the rich ſuffer, and enjoy many comforts which the rich want;—ſo that there is the greateſt reaſon to believe that their ſtate is as happy on the whole.

Thirdly, that ſuppoſing any violent convulſion of the ſtate was to bring about a change of conditions, many would be made miſerable by it, and none would be made happy.

Firſt, I am to prove that it is a thing impoſſible that inequality of rank and riches ſhould not prevail.

It is clearly a great argument in favour of this aſſertion, that we know to a certainty that in all ages of the world there ever has been this inequality. Read the Bible; from the very earlieſt times, at leaſt after the flood, and you will meet with the mention of kings and princes and maſters, and of ſubjects, ſervants and ſlaves:—you

SERM. IX. may remember the names of Nimrod, Melchiſedec, Abimelec, Pharaoh; all of them kings, or men of great rank and power:—you may remember alſo, that Abraham and Lot, Iſaac, and Eſau, Jacob and Laban, had each of them his herdſmen and his ſervants: there is then a great preſumption that what always has been is in the courſe of nature, and that it could not be ordered otherwiſe.

But I think, without having recourſe to what always has been, the aſſertion may be proved to you from common ſenſe and reaſon. For ſuppoſing this equality, ſo deſired by many, to take place, it is not poſſible, I affirm, that it ſhould continue; one man will be more ſkilful, more induſtrious, more fortunate than another, conſequently he will acquire a greater portion of worldly goods. What would you do in this caſe? would you take it from him?—would you not allow him to enjoy his own earnings! Fine liberty this would be, and much encouragement to ſobriety, induſtry, and exertion!

ertion! who would ſtudy, who would labour for the comforts and conveniencies of life, or do any thing more than merely procure the neceſſaries of it, if he did not hope to gain, by his ſtudies or labours, ſome ſuperiority, to acquire ſome poſſeſſions above his fellows, and to be allowed to tranſmit them to his children? Deſtroy all hope of acquiring and tranſmitting ſuperior wealth and ſuperior power, and you put a ſtop at once to all the arts and ſciences, and man would ſoon degenerate into a mere ſavage; he would labour indeed juſt enough to get wherewithal to ſatisfy the wants of nature, but no more. It follows then, as you would not deſtroy the whole happineſs and dignity of the human kind, that you muſt allow men to retain what they acquire by their own abilities or induſtry. SERM. IX.

Hence, immediately will ariſe an inequality which will be perpetually increaſing:— ſo that if you were to make all men equal in riches now, unleſs you could at the ſame time make them all equal in abilities, in-

SERM. IX.

duſtry, and good fortune, within the ſpace of a very few years, the buſineſs would be to be done again: all the confuſion, all the miſery, all the bloodſhed, which muſt naturally attend ſuch a flagrant violation of juſtice and equity, would be again to be endured. I ſay nothing now of the great advantages which men reap from this inequality of ranks, my only object being to point out to you—that in the nature of things it muſt exiſt.

This being the caſe, it is evident that it is no more an hardſhip on one man to be poor and low than it would have been upon another. I allow perhaps, one of you will ſay—that ſome muſt be rich and ſome muſt be poor, but why is it my lot to be among the latter?—conſider that every one might ſay the ſame! ſelf-love may perhaps carry you to fancy that your merits intitle you to have been amongſt the higheſt; it is probable that you are miſtaken; but if not, you muſt remember that it never was intended that men ſhould be placed in this world

world according to their different degrees of virtue:—poverty is your lot, and therefore you ought to reſt contented with it; why it is your lot it might be difficult to ſay, except that it is the will of God! It is probable, however, that if any of your immediate forefathers had been eminent for their abilities and induſtry, or if ſome of them had not been idle and extravagant, that you might have been in a better ſituation. SERM. IX.

Do you endeavour to make up what was wanting in them; be ſober, be induſtrious; you may improve your condition beyond what you can foreſee, at leaſt you will leave an excellent example to your children, by which they may be incited to improve theirs, and in the mean time you yourſelf will live more comfortably and happily.

But it is time that I proceed to what I propoſed, in the ſecond place, to prove that the poor are free from many evils, which the rich ſuffer, and that they enjoy ſome comforts

SERM. IX. comforts which the rich want; and that there is the greateſt reaſon to believe that their ſtate is as happy on the whole.

The firſt evil that torments the rich, from which the poor are exempt, is care! The ſleep of the labouring man is ſweet, but the abundance of the rich will not ſuffer him to ſleep; his wealth is a continual ſubject of anxiety to him; he is anxious how he may increaſe; he is fearful leſt he ſhould diminiſh it. The boſoms of too many of this deſcription are ever labouring with anxiety, diſtruſt, apprehenſion.

Another evil from which the poor are free is, want of employment. The labouring man has always avocations, which fill up his time, while the time of the rich is often a moſt weighty burthen upon their hands.

This is a much more ſevere evil than thoſe who have never felt it can conceive. It is a great evil in itſelf, as none, it is generally allowed, enjoy life ſo little, as thoſe who have nothing to do; and it is the

the ſource of many other evils! Into what degrading and deſtructive employments are the rich often driven, merely to fill up their time! Employments which are prejudicial to their health, their character, their eternal ſalvation! Idleneſs is almoſt always the ſource of vice; and therefore the more ſenſible and beſt principled among the rich always find out ſome innocent or uſeful employment, to which they frequently apply themſelves with as much induſtry and perſeverance as thoſe who labour for their daily bread. SERM. IX.

This is a plain confeſſion of the advantage of employment; which Providence mercifully for the poor has provided to their hands. Hence ariſe ſeveral other advantages, which ſhould not be paſſed over in ſilence. From the conſtant employment of the labouring man ariſe health, appetite, ſleep: all theſe the poor, for the moſt part, enjoy in a greater and ſweeter degree than the rich! The luxuries, which the rich have ſo much at command, few of them have

SERM. IX. have the ſelf-denial to withſtand; hence they are afflicted with languors, painful diſeaſes, and premature old age! their want of ſufficient bodily exerciſe deſtroys likewiſe their appetite, and baniſhes reſt from their beds, and it is indubitable that the labouring man enjoys his homely meal and bed much more than the rich do their coſtly dainties and ſplendid apartments! You are not to imagine that the great look on their fine houſes and gay equipages, and all the appurtenance which belongs to grandeur, in the ſame light that you do: no;—a very little uſe renders all theſe things indifferent to them, and they inhabit their ſtately palaces, and roll along in their ſplendid carriages, receiving no more happineſs from them than you do from your humble cottages, or from walking along by the way-ſide.

Another advantage which the poor have over the rich, is, the eaſe with which they put their children out into the world;—you are ſurpriſed, perhaps, but nothing is more true.

A poor

A poor man is under no difficulty in this respect: while his children are very young indeed, he is sometimes hard put to it to maintain them; but as soon as they are arrived at maturity, their portion, health and strength, is ready for them, and these with the blessing of God will procure for them their livelihood. The matter is reversed with respect to the rich man; he provides for his offspring without much difficulty in their childhood, but the greatest distress is to settle them properly in the world! they must be settled in such a manner (at least if their happiness is consulted) as that their habits of life shall not be entirely different from what they have been in their parents house; and here is the difficulty, a subject of anxiety with which every parent in the middle and higher ranks of life, who has a numerous offspring, is but too well acquainted. SERM. IX.

I now pass to what I proposed in the third place, to shew that supposing any violent convulsion in the state was to bring about

SERM. IX. about a change of conditions, many would be made miſerable by it, and none happy. If it could be ſuppoſed that this convulſion could really make all men equal, it requires but little foreſight to perceive that it would at the ſame time make them all miſerable! All ſubordination being done away, confuſion, ſtrife, and bloodſhed, would unqueſtionably ſucceed! To theſe you may add famine; for, ſmall as the quantity of land would be, which on a diviſion would fall to each man's ſhare, it would be impoſſible for him, for many reaſons too obvious to mention, to give it the proper cultivation.

But this idea of equality is ridiculous. Suppoſe then that by ſome great convulſion, though inequality of property ſhould continue, yet that property itſelf ſhould change hands, that thoſe now rich ſhould become poor, thoſe now poor ſhould become rich; neither, I affirm, would gain by the exchange, the rich would certainly be made miſerable, nor would it add to the

happineſs

happineſs of the poor. Although, as I have ſaid before, the luxuries, with which the rich man is ſurrounded, are no cauſe of felicity to him, yet if they were withdrawn from him, their loſs would be ſeverely felt: he has probably been inured to them from his childhood, and from long uſe, it would be death to him to relinquiſh them. Beſides, if it be expected from him, that he get his livelihood and maintain his family by the labour of his hands, he muſt infallibly ſtarve; for though originally he may have been gifted with the ſame ſtrength and activity as the poor man, yet, from having been brought up to employments totally different, it is now utterly out of his power to exert them to any effectual purpoſe. Let me obſerve, however, that the occupations of the labourer could not be more irkſome to the rich man, than the occupations of many of thoſe called rich would be to him who has been all his life uſed to labour. The ſtateſman, the lawyer, the clergyman, would make

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

make but bad figures at the plough, the ſpade, or the flail; but the labouring man would make quite as bad a figure, and would be ſtill more out of his way in the ſenate, at the bar, or at his ſtudies! We are all of us both more uſeful and more happy in the line to which we have been educated and accuſtomed. The breaking up of a man's habits of life always makes him miſerable. This has frequently been ſeen when a poor man has been ſuddenly lifted into great riches: the novelty of it may, perhaps, at firſt have given him ſome ſort of tumultuous ſatisfaction; but this is ſo ſoon over, that his time grows quite a burthen on his hands: his old companions are taken up from morning till night in their ſeveral employments, and have no leiſure to keep company with him; and if he ſeeks acquaintance with thoſe of the ſame fortune with himſelf, he can probably neither give nor receive pleaſure. The uſual iſſue is, that he falls into ſottiſh cuſtoms, lives neither uſeful to others nor

nor happy within himſelf, and from indo- SERM. IX.
lence and luxury contracts diſeaſes unknown to the laborious, which conduct him prematurely to the grave. No, no; the only change to be deſired in our ſituation (if indeed any be really deſirable) is a gradual one. We all wiſh to better ourſelves; the deſire is commendable, and if honeſtly and reſolutely purſued, certainly makes us uſeful, and is commonly attended with ſucceſs.

Let us not then, any of us, be our ſtation what it will, murmur and repine at it, or deſire it to be abruptly changed; let us not think, however low it may be, that it excludes either dignity or happineſs!—Neither of theſe is at all connected with ſituation; dignity ariſes from diſcharging the duties of our ſtation with induſtry, honeſty, and perſeverance, and the peaſant who does this is infinitely more dignified than the noble who omits it; while happineſs is altogether independent of every thing external, it is ſeated in the mind, and

SERM. IX. is as eaſy (to ſay the leaſt) to be obtained in a cottage as in a palace. Let us not then look to the right hand or the left with envious or malignant eyes, at the rank or poſſeſſions of our neighbour, but let us look ſtraight forward to that point which alone concerns us, the duties and employments of our own ſtation. "Let us not "covet nor deſire other men's goods; but "let us learn and labour truly to get our "own living, and to do our duty in that "ſtate of life unto which it has pleaſed God "to call us."

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON CALUMNY AND DETRACTION.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour.

IT is ſcarcely neceſſary to obſerve to you, that, although the ten commandments are drawn up in ſhort terms, their meaning is very extenſive. The Ninth, which I have choſen for our preſent conſideration, appears perhaps only to forbid a falſe oath in a court of juſtice to the prejudice of a fellow-creature, but in reality it comprehends and prohibits every ſort of injury, which the tongue of one man can do to the character

SERM. X.

of another. The moſt atrocious of theſe is clearly that, which ſeems to have been more particularly in the contemplation of the legiſlator, the ſolemn affirmation before a magiſtrate of what we know to be untrue to the injury of another. The offence, both againſt God and man, which this crime compriſes, is ſo heinous and malignant, that there is no need to dwell on it: it ſpeaks for itſelf, nor is it poſſible for words to place the enormity of it in a ſtronger light.

The next degree of guilt in the violation of the ninth commandment is that of him, who affirms in private life what he knows to be falſe with an intention of wounding the reputation of his neighbour; it makes little difference, whether he himſelf were the original inventor of the ſlander, or whether he reports it after another; if he knows what he is ſaying to be untrue, he is equally culpable. The injury done to the perſon defamed is often as grievous as what he would have received from a falſe teſtimony in

in a court of juſtice: his character, his livelihood perhaps, which frequently depends on that character, are the ſacrifice; or if his circumſtances ſhould be ſuch, as to prevent his ſuffering in this laſt particular, yet the wound to his feelings is often more inſupportable than any misfortune to his perſon or property. SERM. X.

A third offender againſt the ninth commandment is he, who repeats to the detriment of another reports which he has picked up in converſation, not indeed knowing them to be falſe, but which he might reaſonably preſume to be ſo, or which at leaſt he does not know to be true, nor indeed is he ſolicitous about the truth of them: he has heard them, he can give up his author, if it be neceſſary, and therefore ſurely, he thinks, he has a right to repeat them. Suppoſing that he had, is ſuch a repetition generous? is it doing as he would wiſh others to do by him? Far from it! it is cruel; it is what in his own caſe he would reſent as the moſt barbarous treatment.—

SERM. X. But he is deceived in the matter of right; he can have none to affirm any thing, which may injure the character of another, of the truth of which he is not abſolutely certain: when he detracts from the reputation of a fellow-creature, it is not allowed for him to be miſtaken; he muſt have ſeen with his own eyes, heard with his own ears, or received his information from a ſource equally infallible, before it be permitted him to ſpeak evil of his brother: and even then there ought to be ſome very important cauſe which may in a manner extort from him, and authorize his cenſures; if there be not, to ſpeak againſt another, however truly, is ſtill criminal, ſtill directly contrary to the precepts of the goſpel.

Another kind of evil ſpeaking, by which the ninth commandment is tranſgreſſed, and the reputation of our neighbour injured, is the fixing on him in general terms a bad character; calling him, for example, covetous, proud, fooliſh, or hypocritical, aſſigning to him any ill propenſity in the groſs, without

without mentioning any particular inſtances of it; this is very common, and though not ſo much condemned as falſely charging a perſon with a particular bad action; yet it is in effect perhaps more injurious to him: an unjuſt accuſation of ſome one ſingle crime, if it come to the knowledge of the perſon accuſed, he may poſſibly be able to refute, but when no particular time or place is ſpecified, but merely a general charge brought, how can he ever diſprove that imputation, more particularly with thoſe to whom he is not thoroughly known? SERM. X.

Another mode of gratifying his paſſion, which the calumniator practiſes, is by miſcalling good qualities; or attributing them, and the actions which ariſe from them, to bad or intereſted motives. If he is told of a generous charitable man, he will call him extravagant, will hint that he is running out his fortune, and ruining his family; or he will inſinuate that his generoſity ariſes merely from oſtentation, and from the deſire of procuring diſtinction; if he hears

SERM. X. of another, who is eminent for his exact performance of his religious duties, he will ſuggeſt that he is perhaps hypocritical, that he has ſome private end to anſwer by it, and that it is not reverence to God, but hope of gaining the reputation of ſuperior ſanctity, and arriving thereby at ſome promotion, by which he is actuated; in the ſame manner he will miſinterpret and traduce all other virtues, and will conſtrue into vices qualities and actions which are in themſelves indifferent.

Now he, who is guilty of this, is eminently a ſlanderer, ſince he aſſerts a thing to my prejudice, of the truth of which he muſt be doubtful: for how can any other perſon poſſibly know my heart? how can he be acquainted with more of my principles, and the ſprings which actuate me, than what my words or outward actions declare? if theſe uniformly or generally manifeſt me to be poſſeſſed of any particular good quality, how can a fellow-creature preſume that I am not poſſeſſed of it? my heart is known

to

to my God alone; and if all that appears of me to the eyes of men be praiſeworthy, it is the height of injuſtice and ſlander to traduce me on mere ſurmiſe and ſuſpicion; and there is a peculiar cruelty in it, as ſurmiſes and ſuſpicions of this kind, I can never refute: if my heart muſt ſtill be pronounced corrupt, however my words or actions may be unſullied or meritorious, how is it poſſible that I ſhould ever clear myſelf! SERM. X.

There are many other modes of injuring the reputation of another, to which he who deals in ſcandal has recourſe: one man will tell all the failings of his neighbour, and ſuppreſs all his good qualities; another, in repreſenting a particular tranſaction, will tell only the truth perhaps, but will not tell the whole truth, and by what he omits will fix as deep a ſtigma on the perſon or perſons concerned, as if he had invented and related of them ſomething more than the truth; a third will deſtroy reputations by broken hints and expreſſive ſigns, and by an apparent unwillingneſs to ſpeak openly (what

SERM. X. (what poſſibly has not the leaſt foundation) will ſtamp on it a greater degree of credit.

A fourth ſlanderer, and perhaps the moſt dangerous and pernicious of all, vents his calumnies under the diſguiſe of benevolence; and with an affectation of candour, pretending to vindicate thoſe whom he has heard, or feigns that he has heard attacked, overwhelms them with the deeper obloquy. Sometimes he will effect his purpoſe by deſignedly bringing forward weak arguments in their defence; ſometimes under the pretext of wiping off one falſe accuſation, he will inſinuate many more; denying or doubting the imputation of one crime, he will allow that the perſon accuſed is guilty in many other reſpects; now he will praiſe a man inordinately before his enemies, on purpoſe to draw from them an attack on him; at another time he will attribute to his acquaintances good qualities, in which they are notoriouſly deficient, for the pleaſure of hearing himſelf contradicted, or to bring into

into doubt thoſe virtues which they really poſſeſs. SERM. X.

I have ſtill farther to obſerve, that there are ſcandalous ears as well as ſcandalous tongues, and that he who encourages ſuch kind of converſation, by greedily and with pleaſure liſtening to it, who, though he does not concur, ſhews plainly how much he delights in it, who, by artful queſtions and affected doubts, draws on the calumniator to launch out and to expatiate, is ſcarcely leſs guilty than the perſon whoſe vice he thus foſters, and manifeſts that he approves.

I ſhall now proceed to point out the chief motives by which men, who are guilty of this odious vice, are actuated, and in ſo doing, evince its wickedneſs; and I ſhall conclude with ſhewing the impolicy of it, and the dangers with which the practice of it is attended. The retailers of what is ſuppoſed harmleſs ſcandal will be ſtartled, perhaps, when they hear that their vice, as well as that of the more decided ſlanderer, almoſt always has its origin in one or all of the

SERM. X. the following bad paſſions: in pride, in envy, in malice.

The deſtroyer of characters, is, I think, moſt commonly actuated by pride; it ſo happens, that from the deſire of diſtinction, which in a greater or leſs degree is felt by all men, we have eſtabliſhed in our own mind a ſort of competition for it with every one around us; we are deſirous of ſurpaſſing, or at leaſt of having the fame of ſurpaſſing them in whatever excellencies fall within our ſphere. In the generous, noble-minded man, this deſire operates in endeavours to raiſe himſelf by the moſt vigorous exertions to the ſame level with thoſe whom he ſees moſt diſtinguiſhed, or even to elevate himſelf above them; and this being the caſe, as he values the preſervation of his own fame, when he ſhall have become eminent, he ſcorns, as well from intereſt as from principle, to detract from the merits of another.

But far too many aim at the accompliſhment of their wiſhes by what they ſuppoſe a nearer

a nearer and an eaſier way; conſcious that they are either unequal or too indolent to exalt themſelves to the ſame ſituation with thoſe whoſe praiſes they hear, they endeavour to degrade theſe diſtinguiſhed perſonages to their own obſcurity, that they may in ſome meaſure exchange places with them; for they erroneouſly ſuppoſe, that as the deſerving are depreſſed, the worthleſs are exalted, and therefore, when they are calumniating another, or detracting from his merits, his depreſſion is but a ſecondary motive with them, their own elevation is the firſt. SERM. X.

A ſecond root of ſcandal and detraction is envy: this is very ſimilar in its nature to the ſpecies of pride above-mentioned, but yet it is not quite the ſame; it is even ſtill more hateful. The firſt motive of the proud man, I have juſt obſerved, is to raiſe himſelf, and the depreſſion of others is but the means by which he perſuades himſelf that he ſhall compaſs his end; but the envious man has not even this palliation, ignoble as it

SERM. X. it is; an impatience of excellence, an indignation at merit, is all which he feels, and if he can but degrade and disgrace the distinguished, it is all for which he cares.

A third origin of this vice is malice; we have received from our neighbour some real or imaginary injury; some opposition of interests has arisen between us; or some other circumstance has happened, be it what it may, which has provoked our dislike of him; perhaps it is not in our power to avenge ourselves any other way, or not in our idea to an adequate degree, we therefore commence an attack on his character, vilify and abuse him on all occasions, disparaging his merits, and aggravating his failings, whenever we have opportunity.

The wicked, hateful, despicable nature of these passions is sufficiently obvious, and these are the usual springs, from which speaking evil of others may be deduced: the bare enumeration of them is alone sufficient to bring a disgrace and odium on whatever flows from them; but we should be still more

more on our guard againſt falling into this vice of ſlander, when we hear the great impediment to our intereſt and happineſs, which it muſt prove both in this world and the next. SERM. X.

But, firſt, I will juſt mention one other ground of ſcandal, and that is vanity. There are many who repeat and aggravate ſtories to the diſgrace of their neighbours, who are ſaid to be influenced by no other motive than the deſire of hearing themſelves talk, and contributing to the entertainment of their companions: but it may be queſtioned whether vanity be ever the ſole motive, and whether, in a greater or leſs degree, pride, envy, or malice do not mingle with it; or at the beſt, ſuppoſing the vain man entirely free from any vice in his defamatory practices, and inſtigated merely by folly, he is yet a pander to the vices and bad paſſions of others: he does an infinity of miſchief, and that perhaps to the moſt deſerving, and is guilty of the greateſt cruelty and injuſtice. He, who uttereth ſlander, is a fool; he is a great

SERM. X.

a great enemy to his own intereſt and happineſs, both in this world and the next. This aſſertion is true, not only of a ſlanderer, properly ſo called—of one who invents and propagates falſehoods to the damage of another's reputation—but of him likewiſe, who on ſlight ſuſpicions and weak grounds takes up, and goes about repeating rumours, which may poſſibly in ſome degree be true. If the eſteem of his fellow-creatures be of any value in his eyes, let him remember, that he of all others ſtands the leaſt chance of poſſeſſing it; the inventor of ſlander, the propagator of calumny, the retailer of ſcandal and detraction, is the object of univerſal contempt and abhorrence: to thoſe who are immediately injured by him he is particularly odious, nor is there any other kind of robber, whom they would not more readily pardon, than the robber of their good name.

But it is not the injured perſon alone who purſues the calumniator with his hatred; all men make common cauſe againſt him; the virtuous and noble cannot bear the thought

thought of being deprived of a well-earned reputation, and of being ſubjected to the peſtilential breath of obloquy: — they of courſe hold *him* in deteſtation, from whom, knowing how he behaves towards others, they have ſo much reaſon to expect injuries of the ſame kind to themſelves; nay, even the vicious diſlike and dread him, and though, from the baſe nature of all ſorts of vice, they may take a pleaſure in liſtening to his defamatory converſation, yet for his perſon they ſtill entertain an averſion; though they may love the ſlander, they hate the ſlanderer. But with his character his views in life muſt ſuffer at the ſame time, ſince who will have dealings with, who will truſt, aſſiſt, or promote the common enemy of mankind? His peace of mind too muſt be entirely gone, as he muſt live in perpetual apprehenſion of being detected and brought to ſhame, and of ſuffering either in his perſon or his property for his falſities and ill-nature. Such, and many more, are the

SERM. X.

SERM. X. evils which attend the calumniator; and, in addition to them, without repentance, he will certainly be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. For if none "that maketh "a lie ſhall enter into that heavenly city," if to all liars their portion be aſſigned "in "the lake which burneth with fire and "brimſtone," then aſſuredly that capital liar—*the ſlanderer*—(who lieth moſt injuriouſly) ſhall be far excluded from happineſs, and thruſt down into that miſerable place! If, as St. Paul ſays, no *railer* or evil ſpeaker ſhall inherit the kingdom of God, how far from it ſhall they be removed, who without truth or juſtice calumniate and abuſe their neighbour!—If of every idle or vain word we muſt render a ſtrict account, how much more of words of this kind! words, ſo empty of truth and void of equity! words, not only negatively vain and uſeleſs, but poſitively miſchievous and ſpoken to bad purpoſe! Suppoſing, then, it were poſſible that ſlander ſhould

here avoid detection and escape punishment, yet infallibly, hereafter, at the dreadful day, it shall be disclosed, irreversibly condemned, and inevitably recompensed with utter shame and sorrow. SERM. X.

SERMON XI.

AGAINST DRUNKENNESS.

EPHESIANS v. 18.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excesſ.

THE buſineſs of the miniſter of the goſpel is not only to inſtruct his audience in thoſe truths of which they may be ignorant, but to remind them of thoſe which they may have forgotten; nay, he will much more frequently find himſelf called on to do the latter than the former. The generality of men, in all material things, know their duty extremely well; and when they ſwerve from it, it is either that they are carried away by the violence of ſome

SERM. XI.

paſſion, which tranſports them to deſpiſe all arguments againſt it, or, what is more frequent, theſe arguments do not preſent themſelves at the time.

This it is, which renders the reading of good books, and liſtening to diſcourſes from the pulpit, ſo very uſeful; it is not that either, generally ſpeaking, tell you any thing quite new, but they bring to your remembrance things of the utmoſt importance, which the cares and pleaſures of the world are too apt to drive from you; and by doing this frequently (if you have the wiſdom frequently to have recourſe to them) they at laſt make ſuch an impreſſion as to keep you effectually from ſin.

It is on this account that I undertake, at preſent, to diſcourſe againſt the vice forbidden in the text—drunkenneſs. The reaſons why we ought not to be guilty of it have been given, and are known to every one;—and the utmoſt that the preacher can expect to do, is to recall them

them to your memory, and perhaps to place them in a ſtronger light. SERM. XI.

Drunkenneſs is deſtructive of our happineſs, both in the world to come, and at preſent;—if we die while we are in the habits of it, it will moſt certainly prevent us from going to heaven, and in the mean time it is extremely hurtful to our comfort while we continue on earth.

Firſt, then, I aſſert that drunkenneſs is deſtructive of our happineſs in the world to come;—this muſt be proved from the ſcripture, in which, in various places, it is ſtrictly forbidden, and thoſe who are guilty of it are threatened with excluſion from the kingdom of heaven. In St. Paul's epiſtle to the Epheſians, we read—"Be not drunk with wine "wherein is exceſs,"—by which is meant that it entirely unfits a man for ſelf-government, and reduces him to the condition of the madman or the ideot. The ſame apoſtle, in writing to the Epheſians again, diſcountenances this vice: he men-

SERM. XI.

tions it, among many others, as incapacitating thoſe who practiſe it for the attainment of ſalvation,—" Be not deceived, " neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor " adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers " of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, " nor covetous, nor *drunkards*, ſhall inhe- " rit the kingdom of God." Again, in his letter to the Galatians, deſcribing the different fruits of the ſpirit and of the fleſh, of the latter he ſays—" Now the works " of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are " theſe, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, " hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, " ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envies, murders, *drunkenneſs*, of the which I tell " you before, as I have alſo told you in " time paſt, that they which do ſuch " things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of " God." You ſee in what kind of company the drunkard is placed—with the adulterer, the idolater, the murderer, and the robber; and his vice is ranked in the ſame

ſame claſs with theirs:—it is expreſsly aſſerted at the ſame time, that the kingdom of God can never be gained by ſuch as theſe. Nor indeed, had ſcripture been ſilent on this head, ſhould we have been at any loſs to conclude the ſame from the dictates of our own reaſon: our bodies, we are aſſured, are members of Chriſt and temples of the Holy Ghoſt; can we ſuppoſe that without diſpleaſing God we may convert them into mere vehicles for gluttony and drunkenneſs!—Reaſon is the diſtinguiſhing prerogative of manhood; can we expect to be allowed, with impunity, voluntarily to diveſt ourſelves of it?—have we been ſo far raiſed above the beaſts of the field, of our own accord to degrade ourſelves beneath them?—if we do, we ſurely cannot poſſibly expect to eſcape God's wrath and condemnation!—we cannot, for a moment, flatter ourſelves that we ſhall be fit companions for our bleſſed maſter, and the holy ſpirits of the ſaints. I think, therefore, that it is evident, both from

SERM. XI.

SERM. XI.

from ſcripture and reaſon, that the vice of drunkenneſs is deſtructive of our proſpects of ſalvation in the world to come;—let us ſee whether it be not equally ſubverſive of our happineſs at preſent.

Drunkenneſs then, I aſſert in the firſt place, deſtroys the health, without which all other bleſſings are little worth. This is almoſt ſelf-evident: the leaſt obſervation may prove it to us; a remarkable ſtrength of conſtitution may indeed be a protection for a while, but ſooner or later the puniſhment will certainly follow,—it certainly will, however appearances may at preſent be to the contrary.

Drunkenneſs deſtroys the character; I appeal to yourſelves if this be not the caſe. Let a man's ſkill in his profeſſion or trade be what it will, if he be deficient in ſobriety, is it not always a ſufficient reaſon againſt employing him, if you can with any tolerable convenience meet with any other perſon? and very juſtly too, for of what ſignification is his being able to exer-

ciſe

ciſe his calling, if he be at all times uncer- SERM.
tain, whether he may not have diſqualified XI.
himſelf? But if it injure his character, it
will of courſe leſſen or deſtroy his means
of getting his livelihood: the refuſal of
thoſe around him, to employ and place con-
fidence in him, has naturally and neceſſarily
this effect.

Drunkenneſs likewiſe injures the morals; beſides it being an heinous vice in itſelf, it uſually betrays us into many others, as it both heightens our paſſions, and, by depriving us of the guardianſhip of reaſon, unfits us to contend with them. The ſwearer, when under the influence of this temporary madneſs, is doubly profane, the ſenſualiſt doubly ſenſual, and the contentious man doubly contentious. Exceſs of drink has a tendency, in like manner, to increaſe all our other evil propenſities. Suppoſing, therefore, that it had not in itſelf that great criminality which it undoubtedly has, yet, as it inflames and incapacitates us from combating every other vicious paſſion, all approaches to

it

SERM. XI.

it ought to be avoided with the moſt ſcrupulous caution.

This vice is likewiſe extremely prejudicial to the family of the perſon who is guilty of it, both as it unfits him for the exerciſe of his calling with that ability which he might otherwiſe exert, and deprives him of the confidence of his neighbours, and as it leads him into habits of expence, which in moſt caſes he can ill afford.—It is an obſervation of Solomon's, which general experience confirms to us, that the glutton and the drunkard ſhall come to poverty. Added likewiſe to this ill conſequence, it is the property of this vice to create moroſeneſs of manners and brutality of behaviour, which imbitters and corrodes all domeſtic intercourſe. Drunkenneſs ſhortens life, and renders, in moſt caſes, death lingering and painful, while, from the weakneſs both of body and mind, which it never fails to bring on, it indiſpoſes us to meet it with á decent fortitude.

Theſe,

SERM. XI.

Theſe, I think, are the chief arguments which can be brought againſt this diſgraceful vice, and ſurely none can poſſibly be ſtronger; let us bring them into one view: if we habitually practiſe it, we may be certain that we ſhall not go to heaven, and in the mean time it renders our abode on earth as diſagreeable as poſſible; it deprives us of the confidence of our fellow-creatures; it ſubjects us to their contempt; it heightens our bad paſſions; it deſtroys our virtues; it unfits us for gaining a livelihood, and ſupporting ourſelves and our families as we ought, and it makes us a diſgrace inſtead of being an ornament, and a terror inſtead of a comfort, to our relations and friends; it beſides deſtroys health, ſhortens life, and renders death in moſt inſtances dreadfully painful.

There are many who are convinced of all this, but who having early entangled themſelves in the habit of drinking, have not hitherto (notwithſtanding their deſires and endeavours) been able to free themſelves from it. To ſuch may be uſeful, in addition to

SERM. XI.

ſetting before them all the above dreadful conſequences of their vice, an exhortation to avoid thoſe ſituations, and to forſake thoſe companions, where and with whom they have been accuſtomed to offend; if they will not do this, whatever they may pretend or think, they are not earneſt in their wiſh of reforming; for the probability of their arriving at it, if they reflect a moment, they cannot but perceive to be very ſlender.

As the arguments of thoſe who endeavour to prove too much are little attended to, I muſt obſerve, that it is one thing to have been unintentionally betrayed in a few ſingle inſtances into this vice, and another to be an habitual drunkard, and that theſe dreadful conſequences which I have mentioned belong particularly to the latter, nor are they to be underſtood as extending to him who may occaſionally and without premeditation have deviated from ſobriety; but yet every inſtance is a ſin, every inſtance is unworthy of a man, much more of a Chriſtian, and if theſe inſtances are frequently

frequently repeated, they ſoon degenerate into a habit, and end finally in the ruin both of ſoul and body. SERM. XI.

Let us beware of the moſt remote advances to it; if we do not, we may, with no bad intentions, and with the utmoſt deteſtation of the character, become ſubject to it before we are aware, and then it will require all our reſolution to extricate ourſelves; and ſo great is the weakneſs of mind which it brings on, that, if we may judge from the experience of what has been the caſe with others, there is too much reaſon to dread that all our reſolution will be in vain.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON STEALING.

EXODUS XX. 15.

Thou ſhalt not ſteal.

WHEN the preacher chooſes for the ſubject of his counſels the prohibition which I have juſt read to you, the generality of his audience, I believe, feel their conſciences perfectly at eaſe; they, with much ſelf-complacency perhaps, congratulate themſelves that this is a ſpeculation which cannot at all concern them: whatever are the other vices with which they may be juſtly charged, they hope they do not pay themſelves too high a compliment in acquitting themſelves of the vice of ſtealing; they

SERM. XII.

may therefore quietly reſign themſelves to the contemplation of their worldly cares and pleaſures *. But let me beg that you will not withdraw your attention for this reaſon; this commandment is more extenſive, and takes in a greater variety of caſes than you imagine, which, when you come to have explained, you may find perhaps, however diſguſted you may be at the name of ſtealing, that you are not able wholly to exculpate yourſelves from the offence.

The commandments, which were delivered by God to Moſes for the uſe of the children of Iſrael, contain the great heads of our duty: but as they are only ten in number, and drawn up in ſuch ſhort terms, it is not the mere letter, but the ſpirit of them alſo to which we are to attend.

I will explain my meaning—The third commandment ſays—"Thou ſhalt not take "the name of the Lord thy God in vain, "for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs,

* Ogden.

"that

" that taketh his name in vain." Do you think that he alone is guilty of a breach of this law, who makes uſe of the name of God on trifling occaſions? No—ſurely, it is equally broken by all kinds of ſwearing and curſing whatever. Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by earth, for it is his footſtool, but content yourſelves with a bare affirmation and denial, for whatſoever is beyond theſe cometh of evil, is vicious in itſelf, and a violation of the third commandment. SERM. XII.

In the ſeventh we read—" Thou ſhalt " not commit adultery." Some, perhaps, may think that this ſtatute will not reach them, ſo long as they abſtain from a criminal intercourſe with the wife of another, however profligate they may be in other reſpects; but they are much miſtaken; it certainly comprehends all unlawful commerce between the ſexes whatever, every ſort of impurity, both in action and even in word and thought. In like manner, the law, which we are now conſidering, is by

SERM. XII. no means confined to direct depredations on the property of another, but compriſes alſo thoſe which are indirect; not only forbids openly robbing, or ſecretly pilfering, but extends likewiſe to cheating and overreaching in all their various ſhapes; and though I do not ſay that the cunning, ſly man, who embraces every opportunity of taking advantage of his honeſt, unſuſpicious neighbour, is an equally atrocious character with the highwayman or the houſe-breaker, —I do ſay that he is equally guilty of violating the precept we are now conſidering. But there are others, whoſe tranſgreſſions againſt this precept are not ſo general, whoſe guilt is confined to a few caſes, or perhaps only to one, who are far from ſuſpecting that they are culpable at all, and would be indignant at the moſt remote ſuſpicion of it. Let me beſpeak their attention whilſt I enumerate a few inſtances of unfair dealing, which are much too common, and then let them aſk their own conſcience, if it can with impartiality acquit them.

SERM. XII.

The firſt frauds, I ſhall mention, are thoſe which are committed againſt government; to expreſs the matter plainly, thoſe which people are guilty of, when they do not pay all the taxes and duties which the law enjoins. Now it is wonderful how many there are, even of thoſe who are well diſpoſed, and think themſelves exactly honeſt in every other reſpect, who make no ſcruple of offending in this: they will even argue on the propriety of it, and ridicule and doubt of its rectitude.—Permit me to ſtate this affair clearly, and perhaps the defrauding of government may appear in a different light. When a tax is laid, it is always calculated that it will produce a certain ſum; if it does not, another muſt be invented to ſupply its deficiency: now the moſt probable method of making it fall ſhort, is, to evade it, not to pay it at all, or not to pay ſo much as we ought to do: if one has a right to do this, another has; ſuppoſe, therefore, all to do it, another tax muſt in conſequence be impoſed, of equal

SERM. XII.

burden, and we are none of us gainers. But ſuppoſe again (what is really the caſe) that ſome do pay what they ought, and ſome do not, ſtill there will be a deficiency, and ſomething elſe muſt be found out to make up the ſum of what it falls ſhort, and to this, obſerve—he, who paid to the full what he ought to do to the former, muſt likewiſe contribute his ſhare. Now they who do not pay fairly are the cauſe of this additional burden to him, and whether they rob their neighbour with their own hands, or do it through the medium of government, makes little difference; his loſs is the ſame, and, when the matter is properly conſidered, their guilt ſcarcely leſs. It is no excuſe for a man to ſay—'What ſignifies what 'little I diminiſh the revenue!' becauſe, if one man has a right to do this, another has, and if all were to do it, the conſequence is ſufficiently evident. 'Nor, again, is it any excuſe to ſay—'The generality 'of my neighbours are as bad as myſelf;' for reformation muſt begin ſomewhere, and it

it behoves every one, without attending to his neighbour, to take care of his own conduct. SERM. XII.

Next to frauds on government, I believe, frauds on the church are looked on as of the ſmalleſt conſequence. This is a ſubject which will not appear to advantage in the hands of the clergy; I ſhall therefore merely obſerve, that the owner in purchaſing, and the occupier in hireing an eſtate, pay proportionably leſs for it in conſideration of the tithes which are to come out of it; that the clergyman has the ſame title to the latter, as they have to the poſſeſſion and profits of the former,—*that* which all derive from the law of the land, and therefore the eighth commandment is violated, whenever his dues are unjuſtly withheld from him.

The next breach of this precept, of which I ſhall take notice, is that which the rich man is guilty of, when he refuſes to do his poor brethren juſtice, and ſets them at defiance, becauſe they have not the means of

SERM. XII.

applying to the law for protection: in this country, thank God! the law is impartially adminiſtered, but it requires in many caſes much expence to come at it. Now, where a great man unjuſtly deprives a little one of his rights, merely on this idea, I declare to you I think a houſebreaker is an honeſt character in compariſon with him. But this crime is of ſo flagrant a nature, that I hope it is not very common! We will paſs to one which I fear is: there are many who would be greatly hurt at the idea of finally refuſing their right to thoſe with whom they are concerned, who yet make no ſcruple of vexatiouſly delaying it, who are in the habits of withholding from their tradeſmen and dependants beyond the time which has been ſtipulated by agreement, or which cuſtom has eſtabliſhed, the wages of their honeſt induſtry. This offence is frequently forbidden and menaced in the ſcriptures: in the twenty fourth chapter of Deuteronomy we read:—"Thou ſhalt not "oppreſs an hired ſervant, that is poor "and

" and needy; at his day thou ſhalt give SERM.
" him his hire, neither ſhall the ſun go XII.
" down upon it; for he is poor, and ſetteth
" his heart upon it; leſt he cry againſt
" thee unto the Lord, and be a ſin unto
" thee." St. James, in his addreſs to the rich, calling on them to weep for the miſeries which they are about to endure, mentions this crime as one of the cauſes: " Be-
" hold the hire of the labourers, who
" have reaped down your fields, which is
" of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and
" the cries of them which have reaped are
" entered into the ears of the Lord of
" Sabaoth."

But as the wealthy are tempted to refuſe or to delay doing juſtice to the poor, from a conſciouſneſs that their riches give them the power of doing it with impunity; ſo are thoſe very riches a temptation with the poor to be leſs ſcrupulous in their conduct towards the wealthy: ' What,' ſay they, ' will a rich man be the worſe for what ' little we take from him? he will ſcarce

' miſs

SERM. XII. ‘ miſs it, and how largely will it contribute ‘ to the comfort of our families!’ But this is a very wrong method of arguing: for though the circumſtance of its not being heavily felt, by the perſon againſt whom it is committed, may be ſome ſlight mitigation of a crime, it will never make it no crime at all. A thief is ſtill a thief, though the perſon from whom he has ſtolen, were poſſeſſed of all the riches of the Eaſt. Other violations of the eighth commandment (beſides directly bearing off the property of another) of which the poor may be guilty, are, breaches of truſt, that is, either themſelves defrauding their ſuperiors, or ſuffering them to be defrauded of thoſe things which are committed to their charge; breaches of agreement, the not performing the work which they have covenanted to do for a certain ſtipend, or the deſignedly doing it in a negligent and improper way.

But beſides theſe acts of injuſtice, which paſs between ſuperiors and inferiors, there are

are many which take place between equals, SERM. or thoſe who are conſidered as ſuch, with XII. regard to the traffic which is paſſing between them. "As a nail ſticketh faſt be- "tween the joining of ſtones, ſo does ſin "ſtick cloſe between buying and ſelling." I do not think it neceſſary to dwell on the guilt of a deficiency in weights and meaſures, the adulterating of the commodities in which a tradeſman deals, and other iniquitous practices of a ſimilar nature, the atrociouſneſs of which is ſo evident, that nothing, which can be ſaid, can exhibit it in ſtronger colours; but it may be neceſſary, as it is certainly conſiſtent with truth, to remark, that all exorbitant profits are unfair and fraudulent, as are likewiſe, in the very higheſt degree, all advantages which are taken by cunning on generoſity, peaceableneſs, and ſimplicity. "Do unto "all men as you would that they ſhould "do unto you;" put yourſelf in the caſe of the perſon with whom you are concerned, and ſo act by him, as you could reaſonably

SERM. XII.

reaſonably deſire, if you were to change ſituations, that he ſhould act by you. Oh that men would pay attention to this excellent rule! and how ſafe would they be from either knowingly or inadvertently breaking any of thoſe commandments, which relate to their duty towards their neighbour! No need *then* to explain and point out their extenſive meaning; a good heart is the beſt interpreter: one comment, which is ſincerely drawn from that ſource, is worth a thouſand precepts. What a world would this be, if all men would perſuade themſelves to be guided by the above-mentioned rule! Evils, doubtleſs, would ſtill exiſt, ſuch as ſickneſs, loſs of friends, and ſome others; but all theſe are nothing, either in number or in weight, in compariſon with thoſe which from malice or ſelf-intereſt, we inflict on each other.

I will conclude with an aſſertion, which experience will ſtrongly impreſs upon you, that the impolicy of a fraudulent diſpoſition is not leſs than the wickedneſs of it;

it

it is always, ſooner or later, detected; and detection is inevitably followed by contempt and diſtruſt. On the other hand, the man of ſtrict integrity, however low in ſituation and circumſtances, will be ſure to be reſpected and truſted, and the reſpect and confidence of thoſe around us is the moſt certain road to opulence and preferment. But ſuppoſing it otherwiſe, ſuppoſing that the villain were to proſper by his frauds, and had ſufficient artifice to hide them, and to maintain the eſteem of his fellow-creatures: and ſuppoſing further, that the honeſt man paſſed his life in indigence and diſgrace, ſtill the caſe of the latter is infinitely preferable to that of the former: ſince there is a day coming, when this unequal diſtribution will be fully rectified, when the proſperous knave ſhall find how little he has acquired by his diſhoneſty, though he ſhould have gained the whole world, when he has loſt his own ſoul, and the conſcientious upright man, who has been

expoſed

SERM. XII. expoſed to unmerited ſufferings on account of his integrity, will meet with ample recompence in the enjoyment of unfading felicity for ever and ever.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

AGAINST SWEARING.

EXODUS XX. 7.

Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain.

OF the various vices into which mankind are betrayed by paſſion or inattention, there is no one which is committed on ſuch ſlight temptation, and of conſequence with ſuch little excuſe, as the vice of common ſwearing. The folly of it is on an equality with the guilt. That from all other ſins ſome preſent profit or pleaſure is either reaped or expected, even thoſe, who are moſt

SERM. XIII. moſt averſe from them, cannot but acknowledge: but the joys or hopes of the ſwearer, none, I believe, but himſelf can conceive. Yet ſome ſatisfaction he *muſt* have, ſome end he muſt propoſe to himſelf, however ſtrange it may appear, but it is worth his conſideration, whether they are adequate to the heinous guilt and extreme danger which he incurs.

The practice is ſtrictly forbidden in thoſe tables which were delivered by Moſes to the Jews, and which were written immediately by the finger of God: "Thou ſhalt "not take the name of the Lord thy God "in vain, for the Lord will not hold him "guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain." The meaning of which is—Thou ſhalt not on any but the moſt ſerious occaſions mention the name of the Lord thy God, for if thou doeſt, the Lord will look upon thee as extremely guilty, and will moſt ſeverely puniſh thee. But perhaps it may be ſaid, this was only binding on the people of Iſrael, and might merely be meant, as it

it is well known the chief part of their ceremonial law was, to preſerve them from the idolatry of the nations around them; but it happens that Chriſt, *our* maſter and law-giver, has repeated and even extended the prohibition:—"Ye have heard that it "hath been ſaid of them of old time, Thou "ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf, but ſhalt perform to the Lord thy God thy oaths; "but I ſay unto you, ſwear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, "nor by earth, for it is his footſtool, neither by Jeruſalem, for it is the city of "the great king, neither ſhalt thou ſwear "by thy head, for thou canſt not make one "hair black or white, but let your communication be Yea, Yea, Nay, Nay, for "whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of "evil." SERM. XIII.

Theſe oaths, which are here forbidden, were, it ſeems, cuſtomary among the Jews; they perhaps thought by them to evade the third commandment, and to reap the advantage of ſwearing (whatever it is) without

SERM. XIII.

out incurring the guilt; but our Saviour teaches his diſciples a different leſſon; he tells them, that every thing beyond a ſerious affirmation or denial proceedeth from ſomething bad in the diſpoſition, and is dictated by the devil:—"Whatſoever is "more than theſe cometh of evil, or of the "*evil one*," the ſame word being uſed in the original language, which is applied on other occaſions to our grand adverſary.

Theſe expreſs prohibitions of the Almighty and his Son, together with the aſſurance of the extreme guilt, which we contract by the practice of this vice, and the knowledge that it is the great enemy of our ſouls who tempts us to commit it, ought alone to be ſufficient to make us abſtain from it, though we were able to give no account of the cauſe why it is required of us: but if it ſhall appear, that in this (as in all other of his commandments) God conſults *our* good, the reaſons for our abſtinence will be doubly binding.

Familiarity,

Familiarity, it is generally allowed, is removed but one ſtep from contempt. A reſpect and reverence for the Almighty is the great foundation of religion and virtue, the only firm and conſtant principle which can incite us uniformly to what is right, and deter us from what is wrong. Now I think it cannot but tend greatly to undermine this reſpect, and to deſtroy this reverence, if we are perpetually on ſlight occaſions, and in our caſual and daily diſcourſes, bringing in the name of God, and appealing to him. Experience may convince us, that this opinion is well founded; for it rarely, if ever, happens, but the common ſwearer is equally diſobedient to many of the other precepts and prohibitions of his religion; his vice is of too infectious a quality to be a ſolitary one, it is uſually either accompanied or followed by a large retinue. SERM. XIII.

One of the greateſt men that theſe kingdoms have produced, is ſaid never, even on the moſt ſerious occaſions, to have pro-

SERM. XIII.

nounced the name of God, without making a conſiderable pauſe; whether it was that he might reflect on the infinite perfections of him whom he was naming, or whether he was pondering if the ſubject were of ſufficient importance to authorize the mention of the Deity,—ſo thoroughly and awfully was he impreſſed with a ſenſe of God's tremendous majeſty!

Indeed, whatever may be pretended by thoſe who are perpetually appealing to their maker on the moſt trifling and empty occaſions, whenever they think fit to be angry, or earneſt, or imperious, or jocular, it is very certain that religion can have taken no deep root in their hearts. The fear of God, the ſcriptures frequently declare, is the only ſure baſis of obedience to his laws; now it is abſolutely impoſſible that a man ſhould have a proper fear of a perſon, with whoſe name he is continually making ſo free! But the keeping God's commandments can alone inſure to us happineſs, both in this world and the next:

next: when, therefore, he ordered us to abſtain from a practice, which would lead us to violate them, it was clearly our good which he was conſulting. Whether then we regard the Almighty's ordinance, or pay reſpect to our own intereſt, we are indiſſolubly bound to be obedient to the third commandment. SERM. XIII.

I will now conſider ſome of the reaſons given for ſwearing, and ſome of the arguments alleged in its defence. One of the moſt uſual excuſes of the common ſwearer is, that he has got ſuch a habit of it, that he does not know when he offends; this may be ſaid perhaps with equal truth of many other ill habits, but is in fact not the leaſt extenuation of their guilt; it is indeed rather an aggravation of it, for to what a degree muſt we have offended, before we become ſo hardened as not to be ſenſible whether we offend or not! No one can pretend that he began the practice of ſwearing, or any other evil practice, without a knowledge of its being wrong, and frequent

SERM. XIII.

checks and remonſtrances of his conſcience: it is in contradiction and defiance to theſe that he muſt have acquired that *habit* of vice, which he now alleges in its excuſe; the criminality of contracting the habit is entirely his own, and it is a well-known maxim in equity, that no one is to be ſuffered to draw advantage from his own wrong. Let not then the ſwearer think to eſcape the puniſhment denounced againſt oaths and imprecations, by pleading that he knows not when he utters them; it is himſelf alone, who is to blame for having attained to ſuch a pitch of profligacy: though from the frequency of his preſumption, he may not always take notice of it himſelf, he may be aſſured God does; and notwithſtanding the inattention and forgetfulneſs which the cuſtom of doing this frequently produces, there is a day coming when every repeated inſtance of his guilt muſt be accounted for.

Another excuſe of the common ſwearer is, that he really means no harm;—this is a curious

a curious plea: he is daily and hourly perhaps acting in defiance to an expreſs command of his Creator, and inſulting his God to his face, and he thinks to atone for it by ſaying that he means no harm! Even if the vice, of which he is guilty, were not ſo ſtrictly forbidden, it is of the moſt prejudicial conſequences both to himſelf and others; it tends to leſſen, both in his own breaſt, and in the eſtimation of thoſe around him, that awful veneration for the divine majeſty, which is the ſureſt guardian of his laws. And ſurely, if this be the effect of a practice, it is not the pretence that our intentions are innocent, that will exculpate or procure us forgiveneſs. SERM. XIII.

A third ſet of ſwearers are thoſe who profeſs that they are obliged to it, that they mean by it to gain obſervance of what they ſay, that their oaths are merely intended to procure belief to their aſſertions, or give importance to their commands, reproofs, and menaces. To ſay nothing of

SERM. XIII.

the very great reflection which, by ſuch a defence, theſe perſons throw on their own veracity and dignity, it is much to be ſuſpected that the very end, which they propoſe to themſelves by the violation of a plain precept of their religion, is not attained. The moſt ſolemn things, when frequently uſed, loſe much of their conſequence; one of the reaſons why ſo great a ſtreſs is laid upon an oath in a court of juſtice, is, that it is a mode of affirmation which is uncommon: and therefore he who binds himſelf by it, is by ſo much the leſs likely to be guilty of a falſity.

Now when the ſame appeal to God is obſerved on every trifling occaſion in our familiar converſation, oaths become of no greater importance than other aſſertions; and if I would not believe the common ſwearer on his bare word, ſo neither would I believe him, whatever imprecation he might add to it, ſince he is conſtantly furniſhing me with proof that he himſelf ſets no higher value on the one than he does

does on the other. Is not this the caſe? Let the blaſphemer deny it if he can!—to himſelf I would refer it, whether the ſimple affirmation of a ſerious perſon does not meet with at leaſt *equal* credit with his oath? SERM. XIII.

As to the plea—that the orders, the reproofs, or the threats of a perſon in authority, are more efficacious from being attended with imprecations, it is liable to the ſame objection which I have juſt made; when oaths and curſes are uſed on every occaſion, they are no more regarded than other words, they are looked on as coming of courſe, and thoſe to whom they are directed are not influenced by them in any additional degree. But if the caſe were otherwiſe, ſuppoſing them to have all the weight that they were expected to have, it is worth our conſideration, whether the acquiſition of a little temporary authority with our fellow-creatures be worth purchaſing at the expence of our eternal ſalvation.

Theſe

SERM. XIII.

Theſe are the chief reaſons and arguments, which men bring in ſupport of this heinous and too common vice: you ſee how little there is in them.

I ſhall conclude with obſerving, that there are many to be met with, who would be ſhocked at the idea of plain, downright ſwearing, with whom it is yet grown into a cuſtom to approach very near to it; they dare not take the name of their Creator in vain in a direct manner, but ſhew the badneſs of their intentions by diſguiſing ſolemn words, till they are leſs diſguſting to the ear, though equally offenſive to the judgment. Theſe half-bred reprobates prove that they would be wicked, if they durſt; and I know not whether the conſciouſneſs of being wrong, which their caution declares, does not augment their criminality. Abſtain from all appearance of evil: let us not only *be* virtuous, but let us endeavour to *appear* ſo. He who ventures, in defiance of the remonſtrances of his conſcience, to approach the borders of any vice,

vice, and, much more, he who delights to put on its ſemblance, too clearly evinces his evil principles; though his words and actions may ſeem outwardly under ſome little reſtraint, his heart is certainly unſound. SERM. XIII.

Be it our care to aim at perfection: notwithſtanding our moſt ſtrenuous efforts, we ſhall ſtill, alas! fall too ſhort of it; but if we only endeavour not to be openly profligate, not to be notoriouſly depraved, and content ourſelves with even leſs than negative virtue, we may be aſſured we ſhall never attain that degree of holineſs, which can alone entitle us to ſee the Lord.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.

PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY.

ST. LUKE xxiii. BEGINNING OF V. 33.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him.

THIS day being appointed by our church to be kept holy, in memory of our Saviour's crucifixion, I ſhall give you a ſhort account of the principal circumſtances which preceded and accompanied that moſt important event. There being, as we might expect, ſome ſmall difference in the man-

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

ner in which the four evangeliſts relate their ſtory, ſome of them omitting particulars wbich others have put down, I ſhall not confine myſelf to any one of them, but ſhall draw from the writings of all the four, whatever may appear to me moſt worthy of our notice.

When Jeſus Chriſt had finiſhed the work which he came upon earth to perform, when he had given men all the inſtruction for their conduct which was neceſſary, and had proved to them ſufficiently, by the miracles which he performed, that he was ſent by God, he prepared himſelf to complete the purpoſe of his coming, by ſubmitting to a voluntary death; and accordingly, though he well knew the malice of his enemies, and the plots which they were laying for his deſtruction, he reſolutely determined to go up to Jeruſalem, at the great feaſt of the paſſover. The chief prieſts and elders of the Jews had all along hated Jeſus, partly from envy on account of the innocence of his life, and the great character which

which his wiſdom and his miracles procured him, and partly becauſe he affirmed himſelf to be the Chriſt whom their prophets had foretold would come, and whom indeed themſelves expected: but they erroneouſly looked for a very different ſort of Chriſt from him; they looked not for a meek, an humble, a lowly Saviour, a companion of the poor, and a friend of the diſtreſſed,—but they flattered themſelves with the hopes of a mighty prince, who ſhould free them from the yoke of the Romans, to which they now reluctantly ſubmitted, and ſhould enable them to ſubdue and place them at the head of all the nations of the earth. Their diſappointment was great, and their rage at this diſappointment not leſs. The bulk of the people, however, who had been ſpectators of our Saviour's wonderful works, had ſeen the dumb made to ſpeak, the deaf to hear, the blind to ſee, and even the dead raiſed,—loved and reſpected him: theſe enemies of his, therefore, were afraid to ſeize him openly,

SERM. XIV.

openly, leſt a tumult ſhould be made, and the people reſcue him, and accordingly they ſought and found means, by corrupting one of his immediate followers, Judas Iſcariot, to execute their plan privately, when only his uſual attendants were about him.

It may ſeem perhaps extraordinary that Jeſus, who certainly had a perfect knowledge of future events, ſhould chooſe ſuch a perſon as Judas to be an apoſtle; but there are reaſons which may be given for it, that take away the wonder. The twelve apoſtles were always about Jeſus; now, perhaps, it might have been ſaid, if they had all continued united, that the religion which they afterwards preached, was concerted amongſt them for ſome worldly end, and was a falſe religion; but as one of them went ſo far as to betray his maſter, he certainly would have diſcovered the ſecret, had there been one; or had there been any blot in Chriſt's life or manners, he could not but have been glad

to

to have revealed it: but we find nothing of this kind; on the contrary, when he ſaw his injured maſter ſeized, and likely to be executed, his conſcience ſmote him, he returned the wages of his iniquity, and went and put himſelf to death. So you ſee our Lord's chooſing ſuch a perſon as Judas for an attendant has its uſes. It was while they were ſitting at table partaking of the feaſt of the paſſover, that he gave the firſt hint that one of the twelve ſhould betray him; and they were all much hurt at it, and anxiouſly ſolicitous each of them to know if it ſhould be himſelf; but Peter beckoned to John, who was placed next to Chriſt, to aſk him which of them it would be? "He it is, to whom I ſhall give a ſop, when I have dipped it;" and he gave it to Judas Iſcariot. It was at this ſame laſt ſupper that he inſtituted the ſacrament, to be obſerved by all his followers of every age, in remembrance of his death, and it was here likewiſe that he roſe from table, and condeſcended to waſh and to wipe his

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV. disciples' feet, setting an example, as he himself said, of the humility and benevolence which it was the duty of Christians to practise. "If I, who am your lord "and master, do this humble office for "you, how much more ought you to do "every kind of good service towards each "other!" But he foretold not alone that Judas should betray him; he foretold likewise that all his other disciples should forsake him in his danger, and to Peter particularly, who made vehement protestations of the constancy with which he would stand by him, he foretold that ere the cock crew, he would deny him thrice. It was immediately on rising from this supper, that he went into the garden of Gethsemane, where he suffered that dreadful agony, so dreadful that the sweat burst from him like clots of blood, or, as some understand it, real blood burst through the pores of his skin. It was now likewise that he prayed so earnestly three times in the same words:— "Father, if be possible, let this cup pass

" from me; nevertheleſs, not my will SERM.
" but thine be done." St. Luke tells us, XIV.
that an angel was ſent from heaven to comfort and ſupport him. There ſeem to be two difficulties here, which deſerve to be conſidered. If Jeſus knew that he came into the world for the expreſs purpoſe of dying on the croſs for the ſins of men, which he certainly did know, how comes it that when the hour was approaching, he ſhould pray ſo fervently againſt it? This is the firſt difficulty, and perhaps it may be done away thus; he did not really mean that he wiſhed to be exempt from the croſs, but I think we may underſtand his words thus:—' Father, though the weak-
' neſs natural to the human body, with
' which I am clothed, would prompt me
' to deſire to avoid the cruel ſufferings
' that I am about to undergo, yet, as it
' is the ſalvation of the world which I ſhall
' accompliſh by ſuch ſufferings, I ſub-
' mit,'—" not my will but thine be done."
Each time, you obſerve, he concluded his

SERM. XIV.

petition, with declaring himſelf reſigned to his father's purpoſe. The other difficulty is how to account for his dreadful agony; it could not ariſe merely from the fear of death; that appears to be quite inconſiſtent with the heroic fortitude which he had diſplayed through the whole courſe of his life; nor is it at all probable, ſuperior to all weakneſſes as was his character, that he ſhould have felt ſuch extreme terrors at ſubmitting to that which multitudes of his followers, of every age and of both ſexes, afterwards encountered for his ſake, not merely with unconcern, but even with joy. It could not ariſe from any imagination which he had of the anger of God, for he knew that God was never better pleaſed with him than at this time. There are two accounts given of this matter, and as nothing certain can be determined on it, I muſt leave you to adopt that which you ſhall think moſt probable. Either will convey to us a moſt ſolemn and important leſſon. One is, that the pains under which

Jeſus

Jeſus now laboured, were inflicted by the immediate hand of God himſelf; that they were of the ſame kind as the wicked ſhall ſuffer hereafter, and if this were the caſe, they were certainly ſuch as man never felt, and the anguiſh which he expreſſed was no more than adequate to the cauſe. Whether it was (if we adopt this cauſe of his ſuffering) that theſe pains were neceſſary to complete the end for which he deſcended on earth, namely, the redemption of the ſouls of mankind; or whether he endured them as a warning to give men a proof of the dreadful anguiſh which awaits the impenitently wicked,—anguiſh, which ſhewed itſelf ſo viſibly even in the Lord of life—which of theſe two were the reaſon of his having this miſery laid on him, is uncertain; but either of them are ſufficient to declare to us the vaſt malignity of ſin, and the terrible danger to which it expoſes us. SERM. XIV.

Another cauſe of his agony, which is aſſigned by ſome, is this—that he had at

SERM. XIV.

this time before his eyes, in the ſtrongeſt light, the heinous and malignant nature of ſin, and God's ſevere threatenings againſt it: and though he could not but be ſenſible that, by the death he was about to undergo, he ſhould reſcue thoſe from it who choſe to adopt him for their maſter, yet he too well knew, at the ſame time, how much his benevolent purpoſe would be defeated by a ſinful and adulterous world, and how many, in defiance of all his care and ſuffering, would be reſolute to periſh. This, ſome think, will account fully for the extreme anguiſh which he appears to have undergone. However this be, it was to this garden of Gethſemane (a place it ſeems to which he frequently reſorted) that Judas conducted thoſe perſons whom the prieſts and elders had commiſſioned to apprehend him. Now it had been agreed that Judas ſhould point out Jeſus to them by kiſſing him, which he accordingly did, ſaying at the ſame time, "Hail, maſter!" to whom our bleſſed Lord returned this mild anſwer—

ſwer—" Friend, wherefore art thou come? SERM.
" is it to betray the Son of Man with a XIV.
" kiſs?" His diſciples, however, when they ſaw their beloved maſter ſeized, were not ſo patient; and one of them, Peter, drew a ſword and cut off the ear of a ſervant belonging to the high prieſt; for this he was reprehended by Jeſus, and ordered to put up his ſword; " Thinkeſt thou," added he, " that I cannot now pray to my Father, " and he ſhall preſently give me more " than twelve legions of angels? but how " then ſhall the prophecies be fulfilled, " which foretell my death?" At the ſame time, he touched the ſervant's ear, and miraculouſly healed it! He then addreſſed himſelf to thoſe who were ſent to apprehend him, and thus expoſtulated with them—" Are ye come out againſt me as " againſt a thief, with ſwords and with " ſtaves? why did you not take me in the " day while I was teaching, (as I conſtantly " did) in the temple?—but this is your " hour; and ye are permitted to do this,

SERM. XIV. " that the ſcriptures may be fulfilled."—It was now that, according to his prediction, all his diſciples deſerted him. Peter, however, and one of the others, followed him at a diſtance to the high prieſt's houſe, whither he was conducted; and it was here that, as our Lord had foretold, Peter three times denied that he was acquainted with him; and immediately the cock crew; and Jeſus, at the ſame time, caſting a reproachful look upon him, his conſcience ſmote him—and he went out and wept bitterly. But the high prieſt, and the other rulers of the Jews, are now aſſembled in council, and Jeſus is brought before them:—to the queſtions which are put to him, he anſwers very ſparingly, well knowing how little it would avail him; he, however, denied not that he was the Son of God, but aſſerted that hereafter they ſhould be convinced of it, when they ſaw him ſitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Upon this, the high prieſt declared that he had ſpoken blaſphemy; and they

they all clamourouſly gave their opinion that he was deſerving of death; and they began to inſult him in various ways, ſome ſpitting on him, ſome buffeting him, and ſome covering his eyes, and then calling on him to propheſy, to tell by inſpiration, who it was that ſtruck him. But it was now morning, and by this time the Roman governor was ſitting in his judgment hall; they therefore take Jeſus, and bind him, and conduct him thither. To underſtand this, you muſt remember that the Jews had been conquered by another nation, called the Romans, and were now entirely ſubject to them, and were even governed by an officer ſet over them by that nation: this officer was, at this time, Pontius Pilate. It is probable that they had not the power of determining in capital caſes, but merely of trying ſuch ſmaller offences as might deſerve puniſhments ſhort of death; and, accordingly, being reſolved to be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the deſtruction of Jeſus, they were obliged to have recourſe to

SERM. XIV.

to the Roman magiſtrate. It is obſerv-able that when they came before him they changed the ground of their accuſation; at the high prieſt's houſe, they had only charged Jeſus with ſtyling himſelf the Chriſt, and the Son of God, and with ſaying that he would deſtroy the temple; but, when they are before Pilate, they allege that they found him perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæſar (the Roman emperor who was Pilate's maſter) and, likewiſe, that he pretended to be a king. The two firſt of theſe accuſations were manifeſtly falſe, and on the laſt they put a wrong conſtruction: for Jeſus had all along been a peaceable and quiet ſubject: and though he juſtly might ſtyle himſelf a king, he always, as he did to Pilate, confeſſed that his kingdom was not of this world. In general, however, he preſerved the ſame dignified ſilence before the Roman magiſtrate as he had done before the high prieſt of the Jews, anſwering very ſparingly, and uſually not at

at all, to his queſtions. Pilate appears to have been greatly ſurpriſed at this; he was however perfectly convinced of Jeſus' innocence, and over and over again declared that he found him quite guiltleſs of thoſe offences which were laid to his charge: he laboured beſides, earneſtly, to be excuſed from condemning him; and as there was a cuſtom, at this time of the year, always to releaſe one priſoner, he was deſirous that Jeſus ſhould be the man, and propoſed it to the people more than once; but they all, at the inſtigation of their rulers, cried out for the releaſe of Barabbas, a rebel and a murderer, and intreated that he would crucify Jeſus, and even threatened him that they ſhould look on him as guilty of diſaffection to his maſter if he acquitted him. This laſt argument ſeems to have prevailed with him; and at length, though reluctantly, he complied with their wiſhes. This Pilate was a man of very bad character, and had been guilty of divers acts of oppreſſion and injuſtice

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

injuſtice in the adminiſtration of his government; and it ſeems to have been a dread of provoking the reſentment of the principal men of the Jewiſh nation, and inducing them to lay his crimes before Cæſar, and this among the reſt, that he had ſuffered a perſon who called himſelf a king to eſcape—that prevailed on him to condemn one whom he knew to be innocent: he however, as I obſerved before, very reluctantly complied; and even in paſſing ſentence called for water and waſhed his hands (as if that would excuſe him) ſaying, "I am innocent of the blood "of this juſt perſon, ſee ye to it."—To which the Jews all replied, "His blood be "upon us and upon our children!" Jeſus was now again ſubjected to every kind of inſult and outrage; he was ſcourged, ſpit upon, beaten; he had a crown of thorns placed on his head, a purple or ſcarlet robe (the dreſs of royalty) on his body, and a reed by way of ſceptre put into his right hand, and the ſoldiers in mock humi-

liation bowed their knees to him, and cried " Hail king of the Jews!" At length they lead him to the place of execution, and fix him to the fatal croſs; and with him, likewiſe, they crucify two robbers, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. Crucifixion was a death which the Romans never inflicted but on thoſe whom they eſteemed the vileſt of criminals; it was moſt excrutiatingly painful, and at the ſame time very lingering, ſince the ſufferer was fixed to the croſs by nails which were driven through his hands and feet, and he died by the blood which flowed from thoſe wounds. Some intereſting and affecting circumſtances occurred after Jeſus was fixed to the croſs. Great as muſt have been his ſufferings, his uſual benevolence, his uſual amiable temper, does not forſake him. The miſerable condition, in which he muſt now have appeared to his enemies, does not exempt him from their inſults; they continue to ridicule and to mock him, calling to him repeatedly to deſcend from the

SERM. XIV.

the croſs, that they might believe in him; and reproaching him, that though he had ſaved others, he could not ſave himſelf:—yet he does not loſe his wonted patience, he does not break out into any angry remonſtrances; on the contrary, he offers up for them his dying prayers,—"Father, "forgive them, they know not what they "do." Of the two robbers, who were crucified with him, one of them, unmindful of his own melancholy ſituation, joined in their deriſions with the ſurrounding multitude; on which he was rebuked by the other, who vindicated the innocence of Jeſus, and then applying to him, and claiming his favour for thus ſpeaking for him, he received that memorable promiſe—"Verily I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou "be with me in Paradiſe." I muſt not omit another intereſting and moving circumſtance, which occurred at this time.—Jeſus ſeeing his mother and John, that diſciple whom he had always particularly loved, ſtanding near the croſs, anxious for her

her in the forlorn condition he was about to leave her (her huſband being probably already dead) he ſaid to her, looking at John,—"Woman, behold thy ſon; and then addreſſing himſelf to John, he added, —"behold thy mother;" and John, who perfectly conceived his meaning, took her from that hour to his own houſe. And now Jeſus, knowing that all things elſe relating to his life on earth were accompliſhed, that the ſcripture might be fulfilled in this alſo (David having foretold of him, that in his thirſt they ſhould give him vinegar to drink) he ſaid, "I thirſt," and one ran and dipped a ſponge into ſome vinegar, put it upon a reed, and offered it to him; and when he had received it, he ſaid, "It is finiſhed," i. e. "The work that "I came to do is perfected; Father, into "thy hands I commend my ſpirit:" and he bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt. Many wonderful occurrences accompanied his death; there was a preternatural darkneſs over the whole country for three

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

hours, and the veil of the temple, which ſeparated the holy of holies from the other part of it, was torn, ſhewing that Chriſt had now opened a way into the former; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of ſaints that ſlept aroſe, and went into the holy city, and ſhewed themſelves unto many after his reſurrection. So many particulars have offered themſelves to our notice, that I have already exceeded the bounds of a common diſcourſe; I ſhall therefore only add, that nothing can be a greater perſuaſive to a virtuous life than the reflection on theſe cruel ſufferings of Chriſt for our ſakes. They ſhew, in the moſt alarming light, the heinous nature of ſin, and warn us how impoſſible it is we ſhould eſcape, if we neglect the great ſalvation which is offered us. But they work not on our fears alone, but on our hopes and on our gratitude. What great things muſt God have in ſtore for us, if we obey him, who hath not withheld from us his only Son!

Son! and if we have any generosity, how much ought it (in return for this vast obligation) to be the endeavour of our lives to know and to serve him, more particularly when we recollect likewise, that in the knowledge of him standeth our eternal life. SERM. XIV.

SERMON XV.

THE DYING THIEF.

ST. LUKE xxiii. 43.

And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Verily I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.

WHEN our bleſſed Saviour was ſuſpended to the croſs, we are told that his dying moments were interrupted by the mockeries and inſults of the ſurrounding multitude: of the two thieves likewiſe, who were crucified on each ſide of him, one, unmindful of his own melancholy ſituation, joined in their deriſions with our Lord's other adverſaries,—"If thou be the Chriſt, ſave thy-

SERM. XV.

" ſelf and us." But the other rebuked him, ſaying, " Doeſt thou not fear God, " ſeeing thou art in the ſame condemna- " tion? and we indeed juſtly, for we re- " ceive the due reward of our ſins; but " this man hath done nothing amiſs." And then addreſſing himſelf to Jeſus, as if claiming a recompence for thus ſpeaking in his vindication,—" Lord, remember me, when " thou comeſt into thy kingdom." And Jeſus ſaid unto him, " Verily I ſay unto " thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in " Paradiſe."

There are many men, who, though not very attentive to ſcripture in general, nor very apt to lay a ſtreſs on particular parts of it, yet dwell much and inſiſt ſtrongly on this ſtory of the dying thief: they conſole themſelves under their own apprehenſions by this precedent, and endeavour to perſuade themſelves from it, that a profligate life and eternal ſalvation are by no means incompatible, provided the ſinner do but cry out to his Redeemer for pardon a ſhort time

time before his death. 'If,' ſay they, 'mercy SERM.
'was thus granted to the murderer and the XV.
'robber, to one who had carried his ini-
'quities to ſuch an enormous pitch, that
'they had drawn down on him an igno-
'minious death from the laws of his coun-
'try; if ſuch a flagitious perſon, only call-
'ing on his Saviour in his laſt moments,
'could receive the promiſe of Paradiſe,
'ſurely we may expect it on better grounds,
'who, though we confeſs that we do not
'altogether conform to the precepts of our
'religion, yet at leaſt ſteer clear of thoſe
'atrocious crimes which are the objects of
'capital puniſhment from human laws.'
Alas! how deſirous men are to deceive themſelves, and how eager to ſeize on every circumſtance which may contribute to the deluſion! In the firſt place, the caſe before us is of ſo particular a nature, that it can never happen again; its ſingularity alone, in a matter of ſuch unſpeakable importance, and where a miſtake is irreparable deſtruction, ought to prevent us from laying

SERM. XV.

any ſtreſs upon it. The redemption of the univerſe was at this inſtant accompliſhing by the death of the Son of God himſelf! Surely, when mercy on ſo extenſive and magnificent a plan was working to the whole of mankind, no general concluſion can be drawn from a particular act of grace, which was vouchſafed to an individual, a partaker of the ſame ſufferings with the Lord of life, and who in that dreadful extremity, when all others were either inſulting or forſaking him, openly acknowledged his faith and reliance upon him:—"Lord, "remember me, when thou comeſt into "thy kingdom!" Surely, what happened at ſuch an extraordinary juncture, affords no argument of the efficacy of a dying repentance in general, even though we were certain that this favoured malefactor had never repented of his ſins, and acknowledged his Redeemer before. But this is by no means ſo clear; it is very poſſible, that of whatever enormities this poor penitent might formerly have been guilty, his repentance

repentance might have been begun ſome time before his puniſhment, and there are circumſtances in the ſtory which render it very probable. — It is not unuſual, you know, for ſome conſiderable portion of time to intervene between the commiſſion of a crime, and the infliction of puniſhment; even if the culprit be apprehended immediately, it may be ſome time before he is brought to a trial, and ſome time after that before his ſentence be executed. It does not, I fear, happen very often, but yet it certainly does in ſome inſtances, that the gloom of a priſon, the apprehenſions of impending puniſhment, the time allowed for thought and reflection, the removal from the uſual objects of temptation, and the ſeparation from vicious companions, produce in thoſe not entirely hardened, a conviction of the folly and danger of their paſt evil ways, and a ſincere reſolution of forſaking them. SERM. XV.

Who can tell but that this might be the caſe with the perſon whoſe ſtory we are

SERM. XV.

now conſidering! As I obſerved above, it is poſſible, and if it ſhould be true, all conſolation drawn from this example, as to the efficacy of a dying repentance, falls immediately to the ground: but ſtill farther, that his converſion was of ſome ſtanding, there are, as I remarked above, circumſtances in the ſtory which render it likewiſe probable. He certainly had a proper ſenſe of his own guilt, and of the juſtice of his puniſhment; nor was he backward to acknowledge both. "Doeſt thou not," ſaid he to his fellow-ſufferer, "fear God, ſeeing "thou art in the ſame condemnation? and "we indeed juſtly, for we receive the due "reward of our deeds."

Now this conſciouſneſs of having acted wrong, and this readineſs to acknowledge that he merited what he was ſuffering, clearly ſhew that he was not an hardened ſinner; and though they do not amount to an abſolute proof, yet they certainly afford grounds for believing that he was ſincerely ſorry for what he had done, and that if his life

life had been given him, he would no more have returned to his wickedneſs. But I have ſtill more to ſay in his favour: however flagitious his former life might have been, it ſeems not improbable that he was now become almoſt, if not altogether, a Chriſtian. That he was acquainted with ſome parts of our Saviour's hiſtory, and believed him to be a divine perſonage, is certain: in his rebuke to the other thief, he vindicates our Lord's innocence:—"We "indeed receive the due reward of our "deeds; but this man hath done nothing "amiſs." He likewiſe knew ſomething of the nature of our Saviour's kingdom, and appears to have been fully perſuaded of the authority which Chriſt was going to aſſume:—"Lord, remember me, when thou "comeſt into thy kingdom!" SERM. XV.

Here you have a moſt remarkable inſtance of the exerciſe of that virtue, which is in the ſight of God of ſuch high price, and which is ſo much inſiſted on in the character of a Chriſtian faith! The combination

SERM. XV.

bination againſt our Lord was now univerſal; his divine inſtructions and wonderful actions ſeemed to be entirely forgotten, and with whatever majeſty and ſuperiority he might once have appeared inveſted, he was now evidently (as it ſeemed to human eyes) unequal to the power of his enemies.

The Jewiſh nobles and high prieſts accuſed him; the Roman magiſtrates condemned him; the people, once his adherents, reviled him, and his own particular diſciples forſook him: yet was this penitent malefactor ſo far from joining in the general cry, even though he ſaw Jeſus ſuffering the ſame ignominious death with himſelf, that he confidently teſtifies his conviction of his being a divine perſon, and lays claim to his remembrance, when he ſhould be arrived in his kingdom.—Such a high degree of faith as this can ſcarce be ſuppoſed to have been infuſed into a ſinner in an inſtant; it is a preſumptive evidence that his converſion was of ſome ſtanding, and warrants

warrants us in the conjecture, that the reflection and information, for which his confinement had given opportunity, had perſuaded him of the truth of our Saviour's miſſion, and the excellency of the religion which he taught. But to what does all this tend?—to this important caution, that we draw no concluſion that a death-bed repentance will avail us, from this ſtory of the forgiveneſs of the dying thief! You ſee there is great reaſon to believe that his penitence had commenced long before this late hour; and therefore his caſe is entirely different from that of thoſe who perſiſt in their ſins till they can practiſe them no longer, and then flatter themſelves, that if with him they call out in their laſt moments on their Saviour, with him they ſhall obtain admiſſion into Paradiſe. SERM. XV.

But though we were ſure that he had never been brought to reflection before, that his converſion was inſtantaneous, and began not until he was nailed to the croſs, I do not ſee what preſumption the ſalvation of one

SERM. XV.

one ſinner affords of the general pardonable nature of wickedneſs continued until death. At the beſt, the inſtance is ſingle, and therefore at any rate ought not to be built on. What ſhould we ſay of a man, who threw himſelf from a lofty precipice, becauſe he had heard of one perſon, who had fallen before him, and eſcaped without injury! Should we not juſtly conclude, that his brains were diſtempered? And does not his raſhneſs, who ventures to perſiſt in ſins till death, becauſe he imagines one perſon has done ſo before him, and yet obtained ſalvation, ſubject him to the like imputation of extreme folly and madneſs? But diſmiſſing this ſtory, let us examine what ground we have from ſcripture and reaſon to rely on the efficacy of a death-bed repentance. But firſt, I will take for granted for a moment, no matter how improbably, that however wickedly we may have lived, if we have a little warning before we die, and expreſs our ſorrow for what is paſt, and aſk forgiveneſs, all will be well; ſuppoſing even this

this to be the caſe, and that a very little time were ſufficient, let it be remembered, that of this little we are by no means certain; the inſtances are not rare of perſons cut off in a moment, in the midſt of the higheſt health, and with the faireſt proſpect of a long life; ſo that, even in this view, it would be the extremity of folly to venture the happineſs of endleſs ages on ſo deſperate a ſtake as the continuance of human life. SERM. XV.

But this ſuppoſition is wide of the truth. In vain ſhall we die the death of the righteous, if we are not willing to lead his life; in vain, when we have neglected all our days to obey the cammandments of our Saviour, ſhall we cry out—"Lord, Lord," at the laſt! Without holineſs, we are aſſured, that no man ſhall ſee God. Is the acquiſition of holineſs the work of a moment? of a moment too, which fear, anguiſh, and not unfrequently diſtraction, entirely occupy! "What ſhall I do," ſaid the lawyer to our Saviour, "to inherit eternal life?" "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with "all

SERM. XV.

" all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and " with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy " mind; and thy neighbour as thyſelf." Shall he, whoſe whole life has been a conſtant violation of theſe precepts, think to atone for his diſobedience by a few unprofitable ſighs and tears at the laſt? This world is a ſtate of trial; during our abode in it we are to prepare ourſelves for another, in which we ſhall afterwards be placed: it is here we are to acquire ſuch diſpoſitions and habits as will determine our lot hereafter. We know that our future condition depends on our behaviour now; if we neglect it, it is at our own peril; nor is it, when the time aſſigned for our trial is at the eve of expiring, that by lamenting we can retrieve our miſconduct. We have omitted to acquire ſuch habits as can alone fit us for heaven, and, indeed, without which we could have no reliſh for its enjoyment; ſo that unleſs a miracle were wrought in our favour, which we have no reaſon to expect, we muſt neceſſarily be doomed to endleſs miſery. The

nature

nature of repentance, therefore, has been much miſtaken: it conſiſts not only in grieving for our paſt ſins, but in having for ſome time forſaken them; not only in entreating God's forgiveneſs for having learned evil habits, but in having laid them entirely aſide, and ſubſtituted virtuous ones in their room. This is a great work, and cannot be done in a moment, and more particularly at ſuch a moment, when we are ſcarce equal to any work at all. Far be it from the miniſter of the goſpel to pronounce peremptorily in all caſes againſt the efficacy of a death-bed repentance; and ſtill farther be it from him to diſſuade thoſe, who have never thought of it before that awful period, from having recourſe to it then! It is all that is left for them: they muſt therefore do what they can. But he would be wanting in his duty, if he did not tell you that the caſe is infinitely hazardous; that no dependance is to be placed upon it: and from thence to warn you to do what you know to be of ſuch inexpreſſible importance, during the

SERM. XV.

SERM. XV. the time that you can call your own, while you are in health and ſtrength, "before "the Lord your God cauſe darkneſs, and "before your feet ſtumble upon the dark "mountains, and while ye look for light, "he turn it into the ſhadow of death, and "make it groſs darkneſs."

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

PREACHED ON WHIT-SUNDAY.

ACTS ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

And when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing, mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it ſat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

THIS day is appointed by our church to be kept holy, in remembrance of the miraculous circumſtance related in the text, the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt in the ſhape

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

of cloven tongues, like as of fire, on the heads of the apoſtles, and their being enabled thereby to diſcourſe in languages which they had never learned. This happened on the day called by the Jews Pentecoſt, that is fiftieth, becauſe it was the fiftieth day from their celebration of the feaſt of the paſſover. This Pentecoſt, likewiſe, was one of their great feaſts on which they offered the firſt fruits of the productions of the earth, then newly gathered in; and they commemorated, likewiſe, the deliverance of their law to them from Mount Sinai. The day has obtained among Chriſtians, the name of Whit or White Sunday, either from the ſplendour which accompanied the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on this occaſion, or from the cuſtom of the early converts to Chriſtianity being baptized at this time, and wearing (as tokens of the purity which they promiſed to maintain) white garments.

If we conſider the miracle deſcribed in the text, in itſelf, it is of all miracles the moſt

moſt extraordinary; if we conſider it in its effects, it is the moſt important. Let us take a more exact view of it. SERM. XVI.

Fifty days after the reſurrection of their Lord, and ten after his aſcenſion, his twelve conſtant companions, called apoſtles, were met together in one place, when ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing, mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and they ſat upon each of them: theſe cloven or divided tongues were to repreſent the various languages, which from henceforth the apoſtles would be able to ſpeak, and their ſitting upon *each of them* was a mark of this great gift being communicated to them all; poſſibly their being like unto fire was to ſignify the great efficacy of thoſe powers of preaching which they were meant to beſtow; their *ſitting* upon the apoſtles is thought to ſignify permanency or continuance, to ſhew that the gift of tongues was not like ſeveral other

SERM. XVI.

miraculous powers which did not conſtantly reſide with them, but that they were to have the perpetual and uninterrupted uſe of it, becauſe in their ſpreading the goſpel among foreign nations they would have perpetual occaſion for it. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance; they were immediately enabled to converſe and preach in other languages beſides their own mother tongue, languages which they had never learned nor had any knowledge of before. There have been ſome who have thought that this miracle was not in the ſpeakers but in the hearers, that is, that the apoſtles ſpoke in their own language, and that all thoſe nations who were aſſembled together at this time heard them in theirs;—for this conceit there ſeems to be no ground; it is very contrary to the whole ſtory of this miraculous event, and to ſeveral particular circumſtances of it: it is ſaid, in the ſcriptures, thoſe on whom the fiery tongues ſettled, began to ſpeak with

with *other* tongues; but how can this be true, if they continued to ſpeak with their own in reality, but were only underſtood as ſpeaking with others? It is ſaid alſo, they were accuſed by ſome of their hearers of drunkenneſs; and why? not ſurely becauſe their countrymen ſtill heard them talking in the language in which they had been educated, which would have been the caſe on the ſuppoſition above; but becauſe they were ſeen and heard addreſſing foreigners, where thoſe who knew them, and were ſenſible that they never ſtudied any foreign tongues, were likely enough to conclude that they were only uttering unmeaning ſounds, and conſequently that they were not in their right minds. Beſides, among the ſigns which our Saviour, before his aſcenſion, promiſed ſhould follow thoſe that believed, was this,—"They ſhall ſpeak with "new tongues;" and St. Paul, in his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, mentions "di-"verſity of tongues," among the gifts beſtowed on the church. Others have thought SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

that the apoſtles ſpoke various languages at the ſame time, and that a Jew heard them ſpeaking in a Jewiſh, a Mede in the Median, and a Parthian in the Parthian language, all at once; but this is ſcarcely, if at all, poſſible, and the ſuppoſition is quite unneceſſary: it was ſufficient for the purpoſe, if the apoſtles were able, when they wanted to teach the truths of Chriſtianity to any perſon, to ſpeak to him in his own tongue. This they were enabled to do in a moment, and it is the greateſt of all miracles: it is of a nature which was never experienced before the times of the firſt publiſhing of Chriſtianity, nor has it ever been heard of ſince; nor can we imagine any which would have a greater effect in exciting wonder and admiration at the divine power and goodneſs. Our Saviour appears to have reckoned this the greateſt of miracles, and therefore to have reſerved it for an inſtance of the power with which he was endued after his aſcenſion to the right hand of God: the declaration and promiſe, made to his apoſtles a little

a little before his departure from them, SERM. XVI.
ſeems to allude to it—" Verily, Verily, I
" ſay unto you, he that believeth on me,
" the works that I do ſhall he do alſo; and
" *greater* works than theſe ſhall he do, be-
" cauſe I go unto my Father." And what could theſe greater works be? Our Saviour had made the deaf to hear, the dumb to ſpeak, the lame to walk; he had fed thouſands with a few loaves and fiſhes; he had ſtilled the raging of the ſeas and winds with a word; he had caſt out devils; he had raiſed the dead. Now what miracle could poſſibly be greater than theſe? even that which we are now conſidering—" un-
" learned men who before knew no tongue
" but their own, being able in a moment
" to ſpeak fluently all the different lan-
" guages of the earth." Unleſs by *greater* works our Saviour meant *this*, what did he mean? what elſe is there that himſelf did not do, which was done by his apoſtles? *This* we are never told that he *did*, which if it had been ſo, we certainly ſhould have

SERM. XVI.

been; but *this* he conferred on his diſciples: it was the firſt ſenſible effect of the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, after that he was gone to his Father. If we conſider the matter, we ſhall perceive, likewiſe, that in this miracle deceit or impoſition was impoſſible: the apoſtles were well known at Jeruſalem (where it happened) to be unlearned men, ſprung from low parents, and themſelves brought up to low employments; they never could have had the leiſure or the means of ſtudying theſe various languages of which they now all at once appeared to be ſuch complete maſters: if they had been ſtrangers newly arrived from ſome diſtant part of the world, it might have been ſaid that they had attained this proficiency in languages by hard ſtudy, but as they had always been on the ſpot, it is evident that this wonderful power muſt have been ſupernaturally conferred upon them. Add to this, that the Jews were very great *enemies* to them; and if it had been poſſible to have proved any impoſition upon them, they would

would have been glad enough to have done it. Add, alſo, that the miracle was publicly wrought at the time, before great multitudes of various nations, and that it continued afterwards ſtill to be wrought during the reſpective lives of the apoſtles; wherever they travelled they were able to preach the goſpel in the languages of the people amongſt whom they were. And though it may be ſaid that theſe nations, which were ſtrangers to them, had not ſuch a clear proof that the ability of ſpeaking various languages was given them from above, as their own countrymen had, yet they had certainly ſufficient proof to induce them to believe it. The apoſtles aſſerted that the gift of tongues was ſupernatural; and they had a right to be credited, becauſe the other miracles which they performed, ſuch as the cure of diſeaſes, and the raiſing of the dead, were as much out of the courſe of nature as this to which they pretended: the one, therefore, was a confirmation of the other.

This

SERM. XVI.

This miracle, immediately on the ſpot and at the time, was followed by the moſt wonderful effects; ſo glaring was the evidence which it offered in favour of the truth of Chriſtianity, that, after the ſermon which St. Peter preached on the occaſion, the people "gladly received his word and were "baptized, and the ſame day there were "added unto them about three thouſand "ſouls." This was a large portion of firſt fruits, a great earneſt of that ſpiritual harveſt which the apoſtles had begun to reap, of which the firſt fruits of the productions of the earth, offered at this very time by the Jews, were a repreſentation. Nor was the utility of the gift, conferred on the apoſtles, leſs conſpicuous *afterwards*; the thing, indeed, ſpeaks for itſelf. The laſt orders of Jeſus Chriſt were—"Go ye and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and "of the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to "obſerve all things whatſoever I have com-"manded you." How were theſe orders

to

to be fulfilled without a previous knowledge of the tongues of the nations whom theſe miſſionaries were to addreſs?—and how ſlow, very ſlow, muſt have been the progreſs of the goſpel if they had been left to acquire theſe tongues by the uſual methods. On the contrary, with this aſſiſtance, its progreſs was rapid beyond imagination; within the period of forty years, from the death of Chriſt, it had been preached and had obtained ſome footing in every conſiderable country of the then known world. SERM. XVI.

Let us, then, now, and at all times, entertain the higheſt gratitude towards God, for this ſtupendous inſtance of his deſire that all nations and kindreds ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth and be ſaved; let us reſolve to make the moſt we are able of this benevolent diſtribution of divine truth; let us pray to God that as his Holy Spirit at the firſt opening of Chriſtianity gave ſuch extraordinary power to the apoſtles for our converſion, ſo he may continue the ſame bleſſed work by taking up his abode with

SERM. XVI.

with each and all of us, by illuminating our understandings and purifying our hearts, that we may have a true perception of every thing which it concerns us to know, and may resolutely and uninterruptedly continue in the practice of it.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

THE DUTY OF TAKING UP OUR CROSS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

ST. MATTHEW xvi. 24.

Then Jeſus ſaid unto his diſciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.

SERM. XVII.

TOWARDS the concluſion of our Saviour's miniſtry, having nearly perfected the work which he was ſent upon earth to perform, he thought it neceſſary to give his diſciples ſome account of the ſufferings and death which he was about to undergo.— Having done that, having told them what he was to endure for their ſakes, he takes

SERM. XVII. the ſame opportunity of informing them what he ſhould expect from them for *his*:— "If any man will come after me, let him "deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and "follow me." That is, if any man will be my diſciple, if he will entitle himſelf to the merits of my death, and to the glorious rewards I have promiſed, he muſt have the reſolution to forego every pleaſure, and to endure every pain, nay even to lay down his life itſelf, whenever his religion demands it of him.

Of all ſeaſons which could have been choſen for inculcating this difficult and unpalatable leſſon, that certainly was the moſt proper when he had juſt been ſpeaking of what were to be his own ſufferings. If his followers had any generoſity, if they had any gratitude, they could not repine at completing for themſelves what their benevolent maſter was going to begin for them; they could not think it much to lay down their own lives to ſave their own ſouls, when their Redeemer, without any other

motive

motive but their intereſt, was about to ſet them ſo noble an example. SERM. XVII.

This duty of ſelf-denial, and ſuffering for Chriſt's ſake, was not only binding upon thoſe to whom it was immediately taught, but is alſo incumbent upon all the followers of Jeſus of every age. And though all are not called upon to practiſe it in ſo particular a manner, to paſs through ſuch fiery trials for the ſake of their Redeemer, to brave death in ſuch various and terrible ſhapes as the firſt Chriſtians were, and as others, in after-ages, have been, yet all will meet with ſufficient occaſions to try their virtue, ſufficient temptations to exerciſe their reſolution; or, in other words, they will find their religion and their inclination ſo frequently at variance, as to give ample ſcope for the diſplay of whatever hold the love of their Redeemer may have taken of their hearts. This duty of ſelf-denial has been much miſtaken; ſome have placed it in a gloomy refuſal of every thing which could give

SERM. XVII.

give pleaſure to the ſenſes, in an abſolute retirement from the world, in rigorous faſtings, in voluntary penances and mortifications; but this is not the ſort of ſelf-denial which our Saviour intended to recommend:—he meant not to enjoin an abſtinence from lawful, but from unlawful gratifications:—he meant not to forbid the indulgence of innocent pleaſures, but of ſuch as are in their nature guilty, or in their tendency lead to guilt. Nor are we obliged to endure any ſufferings which we can avoid, provided our eſcape from them be not purchaſed at the expence of virtue.

Temporary retirement indeed, and moderate faſting, have their uſes; the one gives leiſure for recollection and examination of our lives, and fits us for acting our parts in the world with greater conſiſtency and rectitude; while the other, by allaying the violence of paſſion, places worldly objects in their right point of view: but neither of them are meritorious or requiſite in themſelves, but merely from

from the effects which may be expected from them. The moderate enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures which neither religion nor morality prohibit, by which neither the commands of God are infringed, nor the concerns of our neighbour injured, is perhaps the moſt acceptable method of ſhewing our gratitude to the bounteous giver; but when the things of this world and the next come in competition, when our intereſt points one way and our duty another, then it is that to deny ourſelves, to take up our croſs and follow the example of our Redeemer, becomes indiſpenſable: we muſt forego our deareſt delight, give up our moſt favourite poſſeſſion, undertake any labour, endure any pain, meet death itſelf in its moſt terrible ſhape, if our religion requires it of us. In the language of the ſcripture, "We muſt pluck out an "eye, or cut off an hand, if they bring "our ſalvation into danger; for it is better "to enter maimed or blind into life, rather

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII. "than having two eyes or two hands to be "caſt into everlaſting fire."

To be more particular: ſuppoſe a man is offered ſome emolument upon certain conditions, which religion, virtue, and his own conſcience condemn; ſuppoſe him in great diſtreſs, and that this emolument would entirely extricate him, make him happy himſelf, and enable him to provide amply for his family, otherwiſe deſtitute; what muſt he, what ought he to do? If he is a Chriſtian, if he means that his Saviour ſhall not have died for him in vain, he muſt deny himſelf, he muſt be content to continue poor, to leave his family unprovided for, to commit himſelf to him, who judgeth righteouſly, and his reward ſhall be great in heaven.

Suppoſe, again, that a man has a friend, who is as dear to him as life itſelf, whoſe friendſhip to him has been tried on various occaſions, without whom, from long uſe, he knows not how to live; ſuppoſe this friend, however faithful and juſt to him, to be an infidel,

infidel, or a libertine, and that he is in danger, from the conſtant intercourſe which ſubſiſts between them, of having his principles perverted, and his morals depraved; what conduct ſhould he obſerve? He may, he ought, to try all means to reclaim his unhappy friend, but thoſe failing, and finding himſelf perpetually drawn in by company and converſation to do what his conſcience condemns, he muſt, hard as will be the ſtruggle, give up his other ſelf, he muſt break off the friendſhip, or be content to renounce the favour of a ſtill nearer friend, his Mediator and Redeemer. Theſe are two inſtances, out of a multitude which might be mentioned, where great ſelf-denial is neceſſary; they may ſerve to ſhew what is its true nature. And here I muſt obſerve, that there is nothing unexpected in theſe ſacrifices, which are demanded of us; our Saviour has not deceived us: he told his firſt diſciples that there were no worldly advantages to be expected from the profeſſion of his religion;

SERM. XVII.

ligion; but, on the contrary, that it would expoſe them to various dangers and ſundry kinds of deaths; and he likewiſe gave many intimations of the difficulties through which Chriſtians, in all ages, were to make their way to happineſs and immortality. Nor is there any thing unreaſonable in them; Chriſt, the captain of our ſalvation, went before us—he ſhewed us the way, through ſufferings and death, to life and to glory—he endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. He has likewiſe promiſed us all needful aſſiſtance in our trials: if, therefore, we ſincerely endeavour, we may be ſure that we ſhall paſs through them victorious: but, above all, he hath held forth to us a moſt glorious reward for our toils—an happy eternity—paſſed in the preſence of God—a reward which ought to make us count all earthly ſufferings as nothing—'but as 'a drop of a bucket, but as the ſmall duſt 'of the balance.'

Since,

Since, then, ſelf-denial is a duty which is required of all Chriſtians, ſince it is nothing unreaſonable in itſelf, and what we may all expect to be called upon to exerciſe, we ought to hold ourſelves in continual preparation for it; we ought ſo to diſcipline our minds as to have them always ready to give up, with cheerfulneſs, every pleaſure or advantage which is incompatible with our religion, and to ſubmit with fortitude to every loſs or pain which that exacts from us. If we are called on to ſurrender riches, or to encounter poverty and want, let us conſider him who, being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who, being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. If it ſhould happen that we are perſecuted for adhering to what our conſcience tells us to be right, let us remember and be conſoled by our maſter's benediction—"Bleſſed are ye when men "ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and "ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you falſely,

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

" falſely, for my name's ſake; rejoice, " and be exceeding glad, for great is your " reward in heaven!" To put a ſtill more extreme caſe, if it ſhould be our lot to be expoſed to death itſelf, for righteouſneſs ſake, let us meet it with readineſs rather than part with our integrity; its pangs can be but momentary, and, theſe once over, we ſhall ſhine as the ſtars in the firmament, for ever and ever. And here it is not out of place to obſerve, that if a Chriſtian withſtand all the trials which he meets with, if he deny himſelf in all the inſtances in which his virtue is put to the teſt, he does every thing which is required of him, and he is not to vex himſelf with ſcruples of what might have been his falling off if ſuch and ſuch perils had aſſailed him: I mention this, becauſe I believe it is not uncommon for devout perſons of a melancholy temper, when they read or hear of the terrible tortures which the firſt martyrs to our religion underwent, and ſhrink with horror and diſ-

may

may at the idea of them, it is not, I believe, uncommon for them to haraſs themſelves with apprehenſions that, if ſuch trials had fallen to their lot, they ſhould not have had ſufficient fortitude to preſerve their faith inviolate. SERM. XVII.

In reſiſting all the temptations which ſurround us, in combating our vicious inclinations and ſubduing our evil paſſions, there is, even in theſe days, ſufficient employment for the firmeſt faith; and he who paſſes through the world blameleſs now, has no reaſon to doubt his reſolution if he had fallen on more turbulent times. If, however, he thinks that nothing but extraordinary aſſiſtance could poſſibly carry him through ſuch extraordinary trials, he has every reaſon to ſuppoſe that ſuch, if neceſſary, would be granted: "for God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted "above that we are able to bear, but will "with the temptation alſo make a way to "eſcape, that we may be able to bear it."

SERM. XVII.

Let us however all be grateful, that we have not been, and are not likely to be, called to ſuch ſevere and hazardous proofs of our faith; let us not think it much to practiſe ſelf-denial in ſmall matters, when we are excuſed from it in matters of ſo much importance; let us not repine at ſuffering any loſes or afflictions to which our integrity may expoſe us, when we remember what the noble army of martyrs have endured in the ſame cauſe; let us carry them and their pious fortitude in our eye, and though the neceſſity, through God's favour, of following them in the heroiſm of their deaths be now no more, we have it yet in our power to imitate them in the purity of their lives; and, if we exert this power according to the beſt of our abilities, we ſhall, together with them and the other bleſſed ſaints, be removed to that ſtate, where ſelf-denial ſhall be no more, where, having ſuffered with Chriſt on earth, we ſhall reign with him in heaven, where our

happineſs, as is frequently the caſe here, SERM. ſhall not ariſe from the ſuppreſſion, but XVII. from the full and complete enjoyment, of all that we wiſh and deſire.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

ST. LUKE x. 42.

One Thing is needful.

THE great uſe of true wiſdom, is to teach us to ſet that value upon the different things before us which their real importance demands. The truly wiſe man conſiders what will moſt conduce to his happineſs: and, when he diſcovers what it is, ſteadily purſues it: nor does he ſuffer any thing to divert him materially from the purſuit. SERM. XVIII.

We are told, in the text, that one thing is needful;—the aſſertion is conceived in ſhort terms, which, when more fully explained,

SERM. XVIII.

plained, ſignify—that there is one thing of ſuch infinitely great conſequence that all others are, comparatively, of none at all. In this diſcourſe, I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhew what this one thing is; and, ſecondly, what are the inducements to attend to it.—What this one thing is, may be diſcovered by conſidering by whom, and on what occaſion, theſe words were ſpoken. The ſpeaker was our Saviour—the occaſion, this:—In his progreſs about the country, inſtructing the minds and healing the bodies of men, our Lord arrives at a certain village, and enters the houſe of two pious ſiſters, Martha and Mary; the one of theſe, Martha, entirely employed herſelf in making preparations for the entertainment of their illuſtrious gueſt; while the other, Mary, ſat at Jeſus' feet, and liſtened attentively to his inſtructions. The former, vexed that the whole buſineſs of the houſe fell on her, called out to our Saviour, complaining of her ſiſter's apparent idleneſs, and requeſted that he would order her to come and aſſiſt; but

but Jeſus anſwered—" Martha, Martha, SERM.
" thou art careful and troubled about many XVIII.
" things; but one thing is needful; and
" Mary hath choſen that good part, which
" ſhall not be taken away from her." The employment, therefore, of Mary, was the one thing needful; and that was—liſtening to the words of the divine teacher, doubtleſs with a ſincere purpoſe of following his inſtructions; ſhe was learning the way of life; or, in other words, ſhe was taking care of her eternal ſalvation.

This, then, is the one thing needful—the care of our eternal ſalvation; and, in compariſon with this, every thing elſe is of no importance. In what then does this care of our ſalvation conſiſt?—what conduct muſt we obſerve to attain it?—what muſt we do to be ſaved?—We muſt, with Mary, be earneſtly attentive to know what our duty is, and, when known, we muſt be reſolutely diſpoſed to practiſe it. The knowledge of their duty may be eaſily attained by all men; the ſcriptures are open to every one;

SERM. XVIII.

one: in them are contained the conditions on which we may claim eternal life; in them all the virtues which we are to cultivate, and all the ſins which we are to avoid, are enumerated: the commandments of God are there laid down in ſo plain and ſimple a manner, that we cannot miſtake them, except by deſign; we have but ſincerely to endeavour, and we ſhall be ſure to underſtand them.

But here, perhaps, it may be ſaid that, for want of education, theſe ſcriptures are in a degree ſhut up from not a few among you,—you would be willing to ſtudy them, but you have it not in your power; this is certainly a misfortune, but it is not without remedy:—for the inſtruction of the unlearned in their duty, and for confirming thoſe in it to whom it is already known, one day in every week is dedicated to the ſervice of religion:—as the ſabbath returns, all have an opportunity of aſſembling together at leaſt once in the day to worſhip their God, to hear the holy ſcriptures read, and

and to have explained and enforced upon them ſome Chriſtian grace or moral virtue. SERM. XVIII.

With this advantage, added to what their own conſcience tells them of what is right and wrong, none need be ignorant of what it ſo much concerns them to know; none need ever be in doubt what they ought to do, or what to avoid, in order to the obtaining of the kingdom of heaven.

But then it is neceſſary that a proper uſe of this advantage ſhould be made—that we ſhould ſuffer nothing to prevent us from aſſembling together as often as the ſabbath returns, and when we are aſſembled, that we ſhould diſmiſs all thoughts of worldly affairs from our minds, and be ſeriouſly and earneſtly attentive to what we are about. I am not unacquainted with the excuſe with which ſome of you ſatisfy yourſelves in the neglect of this important duty;—ſome ſay, they have been working hard ſix days in the week, and ſtand in need of reſt on the ſeventh.

But

SERM. XVIII.

But what! is there any labour in coming to church? in kneeling for a ſhort time, worſhipping our Maker, and to ſit for a ſtill ſhorter, liſtening to his holy word? Is there any labour in returning thanks for his kindneſs during the paſt week, and in begging a continuance of it in future?—You ſpend ſix days in the week, and very properly do you ſpend them, in providing for yourſelves and your families; and will you not ſpend a ſmall part of one day in providing for your eternal ſalvation? What folly is this! The things of this world are but of ſhort continuance,—thoſe of the next are for ever and ever! It is as if a man ſhould be extremely induſtrious to make himſelf happy for a ſingle minute, and be entirely indifferent as to what became of him the reſt of his life. Let us not, for ſhame, make this excuſe, and be too idle to ſpend one hour in the worſhipping God on a day which is particularly, both by religion and the laws of our country, dedicated to his ſervice. Others pretend they cannot aſſiſt at

at the morning ſervice, they are ſo much taken up with their houſehold affairs:— ſuch was not the conduct of Mary, which received the commendations of our Redeemer; ſhe neglected even to aſſiſt in preparing for the entertainment of ſo divine a gueſt; ſhe preferred liſtening to his inſtructions, and choſe, as our Lord ſaid, that good part, which ſhould not be taken from her. But, allowing the juſtice of this excuſe, that ſome care muſt be taken of houſehold affairs, and that it is impoſſible this ſhould not break in upon your attendance at church, ſurely, when you conſider how ſhort is the time which you are detained there, one in a family might be ſufficient to anſwer theſe houſehold concerns, and the remainder might by turns employ themſelves in ſerving their Maker. I ſpeak this in general; it will not perhaps ſuit all caſes; but I leave it to each man's conſcience to tell him whether the excuſe, on which he abſents himſelf from public worſhip, be a juſt one. SERM. XVIII.

SERM. XVIII.

I will diſmiſs this ſubject with one caution—that none of you ſtay away from church, on the ſuppoſition that you do yourſelves no ſervice by coming thither; your devotion, perhaps, you have found to be cold, your thoughts will wander to worldly affairs, you do not hear, or you do not underſtand the preacher; but be not diſcouraged, come again and again; endeavour to be devout, and ſtrive to be inſtructed, and it may, nay it *will*, pleaſe God, that by degrees your underſtandings will be enlightened, and your hearts corrected and improved; and if it ſhould, how cheaply, with only one hour in ſeven days, will you have acquired the wiſdom which is unto ſalvation!

To proceed; we will ſuppoſe then that a man knows his duty; it remains, to make his future condition happy, that he add, to his knowledge, practice; — for knowledge without practice, and faith without works, are of no value. "As the body "without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith with-

"out

" out works is dead alſo." In order, then, SERM. to the effectually ſecuring the one thing XVIII. needful, we muſt live in the habitual and conſtant performance of all thoſe graces and virtues which the voice of our own conſciences, the peruſal of the holy ſcriptures, the exhortation of our ſpiritual inſtructors, the advice of our pious friends, convince us to be abſolutely neceſſary. Our devotion to God muſt not only be hearty, but regular; it muſt not be by fits and ſtarts, and only when the humour is upon us (for the moſt abandoned, I ſuppoſe, are devout ſometimes) it muſt not be confined to the moments of affliction, danger, ſickneſs, and terror; it muſt not only be at the approach of the hour of death, and under apprehenſions of the day of judgment, but in the ſeaſons of health alſo, and proſperity; it muſt be conſtant and unremitted in all times, and under all circumſtances. I am the more particular in dwelling on this regularity of devotion, becauſe I fear there is no miſtake into which we are more apt

SERM. XVIII. to fall, than that of thinking a few ſingle fits of piety at different times of our lives, will confer on us the character of good Chriſtians, and recommend us to the acceptance of God:—it is not ſo, it is the habit of piety which is alone valuable, it is the habit which alone denotes the principle; and without it we may certainly conclude, that the virtue has taken no root in our hearts. Let us then cultivate this habit of piety; let us never omit, on ſlight objections, to join with our brethren in public worſhip; and let us alſo be equally conſtant in our own private devotions; let no hurry of buſineſs, no call of pleaſure, prevail on us to neglect them: we may not at firſt be ſenſible of the benefit, but our hearts by degrees will be ſoftened, and our prayers will be regiſtered in heaven againſt that day, when we ſhall be amply convinced of our prudence and wiſdom, in having taken care of the one thing needful. But, beſides this performance of our duty towards God, there is, in order to our attainment of the kingdom

dom of heaven, a duty towards our neighbour alſo to perform. This duty is briefly ſummed up in that moſt excellent and comprehenſive precept—" Thou ſhalt do unto " others, as thou wouldeſt they ſhould do " unto thee." The time will not admit that I ſhould enter into an explanation of this rule, but it is of ſo ſimple a nature that it is the leſs neceſſary; and though ſome difficulties are pretended about it, yet I will venture to ſay that a man's own conſcience is the beſt interpreter of it, and will almoſt univerſally tell him when he obſerves, and when he tranſgreſſes it. SERM. XVIII.

Let us then be attentive, in all our concerns with our neighbour, to this rule; ever carry it in our eye, for without it all our piety to God will avail us nothing; whatever prayers and praiſes, and however often we may put them up to the throne of grace, we ſhall become but as ſounding braſs and tinkling cymbals; and at the laſt great day we ſhall find, to our coſt, that we have neg-

SERM. XVIII.

lected an essential part of the one thing needful.

Having thus shown that this one thing needful is the care of our eternal salvation, and that this care consists in being hearty, regular, and constant, both in our public and private devotions, and also in observing towards our neighbour, in all our concerns with him, that conduct which we would wish him to observe towards us, I now proceed, in the second place, to show what are the inducements to attend to it;—they are seen at the first view. By attending to the one thing needful, we shall be for ever happy;—by neglecting it, we shall be for ever miserable. Words to this effect we hear so often repeated, from our very infancy, that, from being so very common to us, they do not make that impression which their strict truth and great awfulness demand: all profess to believe them, yet how little weight do they obtain on the lives of many! The truth is, that we do not allow them due consideration; we do not bring

bring them home to us, either deeply or frequently enough; we coldly admit them as ſpeculative truths, but forget how eſſentially we ourſelves are intereſted in them: —would it elſe be poſſible that any pleaſures, riches, or honours, which can only endure three or four-ſcore years, the length of the longeſt life, ſhould ever tempt us to forfeit an eternity of happineſs, and hazard an eternity of miſery! The wiſeſt man, and he who had apparently the greateſt means of happineſs, and who had experienced all ſorts of the pleaſures of this life, confeſſed that—all was vanity and vexation of ſpirit! But if it were not ſo, if a man could be really bleſt in this world, yet what proportion does a few paltry years hold with an eternity? If the riches or honours, which are purchaſed by fraud or guilt, were to be enjoyed for ever, we ſhould not ſo very much wonder that men ſcruple neither fraud nor guilt to obtain them; but when, for aught we know, they may be taken away the next moment, and at the longeſt, will

SERM. XVIII.

SERM. XVIII.

certainly not remain many years, — and when, inſtantly on leaving them, the ſinner will be called to a ſtrict account for the manner in which they were obtained, and everlaſtingly puniſhed, if it were by unrighteous means,—what name, but madneſs, can we give to ſuch conduct! But, alas! the plea of madneſs will not be allowed: men know, or at leaſt might know, what they ought to do, and what avoid, and they have the power of chooſing between them:—life and death are before them—and if they will, with their eyes open, voluntarily prefer the latter, the conſequences of their abſurd choice will juſtly fall on their own heads.

I cannot, I think, conclude this diſcourſe better, than by calling to your minds, and ſetting before you, that great day, arrayed as it is in ſcripture with awfulneſs and terror, which thoſe who have taken care of the one thing needful, will meet with as much tranquility and confidence, as thoſe, who have neglected it, will with ſhame and conſter-

conſternation.—" The day of the Lord will SERM.
" come, in the which the heavens ſhall XVIII.
" paſs away with a great noiſe, and the
" elements ſhall melt with fervent heat;
" the earth alſo, and all the works that
" are therein, ſhall be burnt up; the ſun
" ſhall be darkened, and the moon turned
" into blood, and all the powers of heaven
" ſhaken:—then ſhall the Son of Man
" come in his glory, and all the holy angels
" with him; and he ſhall ſit upon the
" throne of his glory; before him ſhall be
" gathered all the nations of the earth;
" and he ſhall ſeparate them one from
" another as a ſhepherd divides his ſheep
" from the goats, and he ſhall ſet the ſheep
" on his right hand and the goats on his
" left; and he ſhall ſay to them on his
" right hand—Come ye bleſſed of my
" Father, inherit the kingdom prepared
" for you from the foundation of the world.
" And he ſhall ſay unto them on his left
" hand—Depart from me ye curſed into
" everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil

" and

SERM. XVIII.

" and his angels; and theſe ſhall go into
" everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous
" into life eternal."

With this deſcription I reſt my cauſe, as I am well convinced, that whoever gives himſelf time to conſider it, however he may be prompted by paſſion to deny, will be forced by reaſon to confeſs, that the care of his ſalvation is the one thing, which is ſolely and excluſively needful.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

FIRST PART.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE SICK.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. LATTER PART OF V. 1.

Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, and not live.

IT is appointed to all men once to die; death is the only paſſage from this world to the next. This awful event is uſually preceded by a courſe of ſickneſs, of longer or ſhorter continuance; and during this ſickneſs we are called on to the practice of ſome particular duties, the principal of which I ſhall endeavour to point out in this diſcourſe. Theſe duties are partly temporal,

SERM. XIX.

ral, partly ſpiritual; ſome of them relate to our concerns in this world, and have for their object our fellow-creature; ſome relate to the ſtate to which we are going, and have for their object God, and the ſalvation of our ſouls.

I ſhall treat, in the firſt place, of thoſe temporal duties which it is neceſſary that the ſick man ſhould fulfil. Now many of theſe to a certain degree, and ſome altogether, ſhould be performed during health; but as the generality of mankind are too apt to neglect them at that ſeaſon, it becomes the more highly requiſite that they ſhould make all the amends in their power, when they perceive their end approaching. The firſt of theſe duties is juſtice; under which is comprehended the payment of our debts, the diſpoſal of the remainder of our fortune, and the intreating pardon, and making all the atonement which we are able to thoſe whom we are conſcious that we have injured.

No

SERM. XIX.

No debts ſhould be contracted at any time, which there is the ſlighteſt chance that we may not be able to pay. It is not allowable for us to reckon with certainty upon living to ſuch a period, and going in debt on the ſtrength of that expectation, when we are conſcious, that if we die before, our creditors will loſe by having truſted us. I will ſuppoſe, therefore, that when a perſon comes to be attacked with a dangerous diſeaſe, he is, as he ought to be, fully able to anſwer all demands upon him. —One of the firſt things, then, which he ſhould do, is to diſcharge theſe demands, and where this is impoſſible to be done on the inſtant, to take all proper meaſures to ſecure their being diſcharged with expedition. If there are any debts, which are only known to himſelf and the party to whom they are due, he ought to take inſtant care to acknowledge them before impartial and reſpectable witneſſes. To reſtore to his neighbour what he has wronged him of, is another duty of the ſick man. This, indeed, ought

SERM. XIX.

ought to have been done in health, and how far it will avail at the close of life, it would be great presumption to determine; however, if it has been neglected before, it is the more highly necessary to have recourse to it then: it is all that is left for us, and there can be no hope of God's favour without it: it may possibly be attended with great difficulty; but if men will do amiss, they must take the consequences of their wickedness;—the difficulty of making amends must not deter them from trying to do it, and if they are themselves at a loss to know how, they must take the advice of sensible and honest friends.

In some cases, perhaps, this restitution may greatly diminish what we might leave to our children,—what then! it would be berter that my son should beg his bread from door to door, than that he should live in the greatest affluence on the fruits of his father's dishonesty. The blessing of a just God cannot be expected on what has been unlawfully acquired; he himself has told us.

us, that he viſits the iniquities of the parents on the children, and more particularly, perhaps, where they have been enriched by their parents' crimes. In other caſes the reſtitution may be impoſſible to be made, ſince what has been unjuſtly acquired is very often either diſſipated in extravagance, or taken from us by God's withdrawing his protection from our concerns; when this happens, it is our duty to feel and to expreſs ſorrow and contrition, and to make all due acknowledgements to the parties injured.

Next to the payment of our debts, and reſtitution of what we wrongfully poſſeſs, follows the diſpoſal of the remainder of our ſubſtance.

And here permit me earneſtly to exhort all thoſe who have any worldly goods to diſpoſe of, not to drive off making their wills to the laſt, but to do what they know to be ſo neceſſary, in the time of health and ſtrength, when their memory is unimpaired, and their judgment ſtrong and ſound.

SERM. XIX.

found. It may be, they *know* it may be, that the next moment may number them with the dead, and in what a diſtreſſed condition may they then leave thoſe who are the neareſt and deareſt to them! But ſuppoſing that they ſhould have ſome warning allowed them, the hour of ſickneſs is not a proper hour for buſineſs of this kind; the terrors and weariſomeneſs, the pain, the anxiety, which that period uſually brings with it, will find us ſufficient employment. Beſides, who knows but their faculties may be ſo weakened as to render them incapable of determining what diſpoſal is right for them to make; thoſe who are the moſt proper and the moſt able to adviſe them may be abſent at the time, or may be artfully kept out of the way, and they may be prevailed upon to do what juſtice and their own feelings (in their right judgments) would equally condemn. If, however, they ſhould have omitted this neceſſary ſettlement of their affairs before, they muſt haſten to make up for it then,

and

and to do what they can. Should they have any reaſon to ſuſpect that the ſhock of diſeaſe has unſettled their underſtandings, they will do well to conſult with ſome diſintereſted adviſers, and not to truſt entirely to themſelves, much leſs to thoſe who are intereſted to miſlead them. It is not practicable to give any general counſel on the manner in which your worldly ſubſtance ſhould be diſpoſed of—particular circumſtances preclude any rules from reaching all caſes: it is, however, obvious that thoſe who are by blood and nature allied to us, thoſe to whom we have deſignedly given expectations of profiting by us, and thoſe with whom we have lived in mutual returns of kindneſs and friendſhip, have the faireſt claims on our favour.—Where we have children, perhaps, there is ſcarcely any thing which ſhould exclude them. It may be obſerved further, that neither fanciful partiality nor reſentment ſhould be allowed to prevail to any conſiderable degree. It is high time when we

SERM. XIX.

SERM. XIX.

are leaving the world, to eradicate all thoſe paſſions which have not a ſound foundation; not what it would pleaſe us to do, but what juſtice and propriety demand from us, ſhould regulate and govern our proceeding. They whoſe fortunes will allow it, after they have taken care of their own families, and have conſidered thoſe who have reaſonable expectations on them, will do well, according to their circumſtances, to remember the poor: any bequeſts to public charities are peculiarly uſeful; but it is neither our duty, nor is it, I think, juſtifiable, to do this to the material injury of any very near connexions: we muſt be aware alſo how we think to atone, by profuſion of charity at our deaths, for the neglect of it during our lives: the ſmalleſt ſums taken from our own wants, while we are well, and able ourſelves to enjoy them, and applied regularly to the relief of the diſtreſſed, carry with them infinitely more merit than thouſands beſtowed in the ſame way at our deaths.

Another

SERM. XIX.

Another duty, which I mentioned as expected from the ſick, is to aſk pardon and to make all the atonement in their power, to thoſe whom they know that they have injured. This, as at all times it is incumbent on us, is doubtleſs more peculiarly ſo at the approach of death, and under apprehenſions of the day of judgment. The laſt opportunity of doing what, perhaps, ought to have been done long ago, is arrived: if, therefore, we have defrauded our neighbour, as I have before ſaid, we muſt make reſtitution; if we have hurt his character by our calumnies, we muſt recant what we have advanced to his prejudice; if we have been injurious to him in any other reſpect, have oppreſſed, harraſſed, or inſulted him, we muſt ſincerely aſk his forgiveneſs, and ſeek with him a thorough reconciliation. And while we are endeavouring to appeaſe thoſe whom we have injured, we muſt, in our turn, be ready to pardon thoſe who have injured us: to retain our reſentment at ſuch a time, would be to che-

SERM. XIX.

riſh a temper of mind very unfit for that place, to which we are to hope we are going. It is right likewiſe not only to ſubdue all anger in our own minds, but to give ſome outward token of it either to the parties themſelves, who have offended us, or if that be impracticable or inconvenient, to thoſe who may be around us at the time. Other duties are required from us when we are ſick, which reſpect our fellow-creature, and which, though they do not come preciſely under the head of juſtice, are ſcarcely leſs important, ſuch as kindneſs and conſideration for thoſe who attend upon us in our illneſs, and ſeaſonable advice adapted to their particular ſituations, and drawn from ours. It is more peculiarly neceſſary to preſs the firſt of theſe, becauſe ſickneſs is too apt to be accompanied with peeviſhneſs and impatience, to cauſe us to imagine things amiſs beyond what they really are, and to make us expect from our friends more care, ſkill, and dexterity, than they are capable of exerting.

This

SERM. XIX.

This is a propenſity which it is our duty to do our beſt to overcome, and that for various reaſons; in the firſt place, it increaſes our own ſufferings, which patience and reſignation would greatly mitigate; and ſecondly, it is very unjuſt to our friends, to whoſe cares we ought to remember we are ſo much obliged; who go through ſo fatiguing and diſagreeable an office on our account, and whom our frowardneſs is very unlikely to make more diligent in their attendance, but will, moſt probably, diſcourage and abate their zeal in our ſervice.

Seaſonable advice to thoſe around us, in our dying hours, drawn from our own ſituation, and adapted to theirs, is, as I obſerved, a duty particularly incumbent on us. The time is awful, and the hearts of the dying perſon's friends are commonly deeply touched, and open to any impreſſion, which, in his laſt words, he may wiſh to make upon them: this is an opportunity which ought not to be neglected; he

SERM. XIX.

ought to repreſent to them what will, full ſurely, be his own feelings, the vanity and emptineſs of all earthly concerns, the little pleaſure with which he now looks back on any worldly acquirements which he may have made, on any worldly accompliſhments which he may have poſſeſſed; the recollection of having been regular and conſtant in the performance of his duty towards God—juſt and charitable according to his means, in his behaviour towards his fellow-creatures—and ſober, chaſte, and temperate, in his own perſonal conduct,—he will aſſure them, are now his only comforts;—on the other hand, if unhappily he has not this to ſay, he may tell them, for he will full certainly experience it, of the remorſe which he feels for the ſins of which he has been guilty, and for the various virtues which he has omitted—and how very different a courſe of life he will purſue in future, if it ſhould pleaſe God to reſtore him to health. Let him not fear

fear to declare this reſolution, from the apprehenſion that if he recovers he ſhall diſgrace himſelf by not adhering to it, ſince he cannot but know how deeply he is intereſted in it; and perhaps the having openly declared his intentions, may be one means of keeping him to them in caſe of his recovery. SERM. XIX.

They who are able may ſay much more than what I have recommended, but all may ſay this; all may ſay, how much pleaſure the recollection of their good actions gives them, and how much concern and terror the remembrance of their vices; all may recommend the former, and earneſtly conjure thoſe who are around them to avoid the latter. The good may thus confirm the virtuous impreſſion which their lives have made on their friends, by this counſel at their deaths; and the wicked may in ſome meaſure (at leaſt it is all which they can do) weaken the bad effects of the paſt vicious example which

SERM. XIX. they have ſet. I ſhould now proceed to point out thoſe duties of the dying perſon, which have for their object God and the ſalvation of his own ſoul; but this I muſt reſerve for a future opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XX.

SECOND PART.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE SICK.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. LATTER PART OF V. 1.

Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, and not live.

IN a late diſcourſe on this text, I propoſed to point out the principal duties incumbent on us in the hour of ſickneſs. Theſe, I obſerved, were of two kinds, temporal and ſpiritual; the firſt relating to our fellow-creatures, the latter to God and our own ſouls. The duties which relate to our fellow-creatures I have already laid before you; to

SERM. XIX.

SERM. XX. to thoſe due from us to God, and which have for their object the ſalvation of our ſouls, I ſhall beg your attention at preſent.

The firſt of theſe which I ſhall mention is patience. This virtue is the more neceſſary for us to practiſe, inaſmuch as without it we ſhall be totally unable to practiſe any other. Turbulence or deſpondency under our pains and danger will equally unfit us either for performing, or even perceiving what we ought to do. To be reſigned to our afflictions, be they of what kind they may, is likewiſe the expreſs command of God, and that in ſuch a multitude of places in the ſcripture, that it is not neceſſary to mention them: in conformity with this command, all the moſt eminent perſonages whoſe hiſtory is recorded in the ſacred writings, were remarkably diſtinguiſhed by their patient ſubmiſſion to the evils which befel them. You remember the numberleſs, heavy calamities which were experienced by Job; what were his ſentiments under them? — "The Lord hath

"given,

" given, and the Lord hath taken away; SERM.
" bleſſed be the name of the Lord!" And XX.
when to the other evils, with which he was oppreſſed, the moſt loathſome and painful diſeaſe was added, how nobly does he ſupport himſelf under it! The recollection of the paſt bleſſings, which he had enjoyed, engaged his gratitude more than his preſent ſufferings excited his affliction. " Shall
" we receive good (exclaimed he) at the
" hands of God, and ſhall we not re-
" ceive evil?" You have not forgot the reſigned anſwer of Eli to the prophetic threatenings of Samuel:—" It is the Lord,
" let him do what ſeemeth him good."
Indeed this conſideration—that our ſuffering is from God, as it ſhould reconcile us to all other afflictions, loſs of property, reputation, friends,—ſo alſo ſhould it reconcile us to the loſs of health, and to the apparently approaching loſs of life, not only when it pleaſes God to deprive us of our ſubſtance, to croſs us in our hopes and expectations, and to ſnatch from us our neareſt connexions;

SERM. XX.

nexions; but when, in the language of ſcripture, "he puts forth his hand, and "touches our bone and our fleſh, and "threatens to take from us that breath "which he beſtowed, even then ought we "to bend ſubmiſſively to his decrees."— But patience under the pains of ſickneſs is not only our duty, it is our intereſt alſo, and that both with regard to this world and the next. To fret, to repine, to give encouragement either to peeviſhneſs or deſpondency, will greatly increaſe any evil with which we may be afflicted, and more particularly ſickneſs; while, by an oppoſite behaviour, we may frequently alleviate it, and that not only in idea, but in reality. It is our intereſt to be patient, likewiſe, with a view to our condition in the next world; whatever evils befall us here are capable of being converted into the greateſt good to us hereafter by our conduct under them; and of all proper conduct, reſignation is the ground and foundation. Another duty which I ſhall mention

mention as neceſſary for the ſick to exerciſe, is ſelf-examination. This is required of us at certain ſeaſons during the whole courſe of our lives, but it is more particularly our duty, when the laſt opportunity of making our peace with God is apparently arrived; then, eſpecially, it behoves us to ſearch what ſort of perſons we are, and what is our chance of eternal ſalvation.—This ſelf-examination is made by comparing our conduct with the rule of our duty; by aſking ourſelves, whether we have been habitually pious towards God? whether we have offered our prayers and thankſgivings to him regularly at his houſe, on his own peculiar day? and whether we have been conſtant in the performance of the ſame pious offices, morning and evening, at our own homes?

We muſt inquire, likewiſe, whether we have behaved to our fellow-creatures as we could reaſonably expect that they ſhould behave towards us; whether we have been juſt, charitable, gentle, forgiving. This

ſelf-

SERM. XX.

ſelf-examination may to too many be a melancholy taſk; but this ought to be a ſtrong argument with us not to act wrong in health, for if we do, we muſt take the conſequences; and it is better for us to feel the moſt bitter remorſe, and to undergo the moſt alarming terrors in this world, while they may poſſibly be the means of bettering our condition hereafter, than to ſtifle all thought and reflection, and die with all our unrepented ſins upon our heads.

For the reaſon why this ſelf-examination is requiſite is, that it is an introduction to the practice of two other duties, confeſſion and repentance. By confeſſion is meant, not confeſſion to men but to God; though the former in ſome caſes, where the offender is in doubt what ſort of atonement he ought to make, may be neceſſary for him in order to receive ſpiritual advice and conſolation: but however this may be, confeſſion of our ſins to God, as at all times, ſo eſpecially at the approach of

of death, is indiſpenſable; it is indiſpenſable in order to our repenting and obtaining forgiveneſs; if we do not own that we have been guilty, how can we expreſs ſorrow for our ſins, or entreat God to pardon us!

After confeſſion follows repentance;—this is made up of ſorrow that we have offended God, and endangered our own ſouls, and a firm purpoſe to reform our lives, if it ſhould pleaſe the Almighty to prolong them. Let not, however, any one flatter himſelf that the practice of theſe on his death-bed will avail him, if he lived in the conſtant neglect of them before; I very much fear that it will not; however, it is all that is left for him—he muſt do what he can; proper behaviour at this awful period will probably better his ſituation, and cannot make it worſe; but what I mean is, that it would be the height of folly and preſumption to truſt to it entirely.

The

SERM. XX.

The repentance exerciſed at our latter end, ought only to be the more ſolemn completion of what we have lived in the conſtant habit of before. Entreaty for God's pardon and acceptance, is to follow this confeſſion and repentance; and this we are to offer up, not truſting in any fancied merits of our own, not confiding in our tears and ſupplications, but in the mercy of God, and in the merits and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſick are cut off from the duties of active life, and it is therefore more highly incumbent on them to dedicate a great portion of their time to religious meditations and religious employments; I do not ſay that they are to uſe them to ſuch a degree as to bring themſelves into any farther danger, by terrifying themſelves into a ſtate of melancholy or deſpair, but that in general, particularly in long illneſſes, the above employment of their time will be a ſource of the greateſt comfort and ſatisfaction. And here let me caution

caution thoſe, whom illneſs prevents for any conſiderable time from engaging in the duties of active life, not too greatly to lament and repine at it: God knows what is beſt for us; in whatever ſtate it pleaſes him to place us, that is our trial; it is according to our behaviour in that ſtate that we ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed by him; from thoſe to whom he gives health and ſtrength he expects one kind of exertion; from thoſe whom he viſits with diſeaſe, and confines to the chamber of ſickneſs, he requires another. Each may have their ſeparate merits, and the ſick may deſerve as much of God as the well. Let not then the ſick complain that they are cut off from the means of doing good; they have no reaſon; their example may be productive of the greateſt good; their patience, their piety, their reliance on th divine goodneſs, may be more highly beneficial to thoſe around them, than the greateſt earthly kindneſſes which they could confer. I have already recommended pa- SERM. XX.

SERM. XX.

tience under what we are actually ſuffering; but it may be neceſſary, likewiſe, to caution you againſt encouraging too great apprehenſions of what you imagine that you may ſuffer. This is neceſſary, becauſe there are perſons who think they could ſupport their preſent pains with tolerable fortitude, but who at times ſink under the idea of the greater ſufferings, which they ſuſpect ſtill to await them. Surely this is diſquieting themſelves in vain; all their melancholy terrors cannot avert the decrees of the Almighty; and in the mean time the deſpondency to which they give way is in itſelf criminal, as it implies a diſtruſt of God, and it likewiſe greatly aggravates their actual afflictions, and deprives them of what little comfort they might experience. "Sufficient for the day is the evil "thereof." Let them bear as well as they can, what God at preſent inflicts, and let them truſt to his goodneſs to ſupport them under the ſorrows which may remain. If they have that faith, and uſe that ſupplication

cation which they ought, they may be ſure that he will do ſo. Beſides, we in general bear afflictions much better than we expect; they are not always ſo terrible as they appear to be at a diſtance. As to the pang of death itſelf, the ſeparation of the ſoul from the body, we have no reaſon to think it exceeds in poignancy what the generality have more than once undergone in the courſe of their lives. There are many perſons who, when they approach to the brink of the grave, are aſſailed by ſuch terrors as to be unable to make any exertions, either temporal or ſpiritual. But this is very wrong, and what we ought to ſtrive againſt with all our power. Our ſtate may poſſibly not be ſo bad as what the weakneſs of mind which frequently accompanies weakneſs of body repreſents it. If we have only to charge ourſelves with common failings, we may reaſonably hope that this is the caſe; but at any rate, to ſuffer ourſelves to be ſo frightened as to be unable to attend to any of the offices

SERM. XX.

SERM. XX.

of religion, is abſurd, as it cannot make our caſe better, and will probably make it much worſe. It is indeed a fearful thing for the guilty to fall into the hands of the living God; but while there is life there is generally hope; and proper behaviour, with ſincere reſolutions of reforming, if we recover, may induce God to try us a little time longer, or to accept our repentance, if we die; whereas doing nothing at all muſt in every light be hurtful to us. As it is appointed to all men once to die, thoſe who have reached any advanced period of life cannot, even with the appearance of reaſon, complain when they are called on to partake of the common lot; but the reluctance of the young to quit the world ſeems at firſt ſight more allowable, and there are others beſides themſelves who haſtily term their ſentence hard. But it ſhould be remembered, that as God gave, ſo he has a right at any time to take away; that we exiſt a moment is owing to his goodneſs, and therefore there can be no ground

ground for murmurs when he decrees that we ſhall live no longer. Beſides, we are all fully apprized of the uncertainty of our continuance here; how very ſmall a portion of the human ſpecies, comparatively, lives to be old; and to how much ſmaller a portion can their length of days be called a bleſſing. Too many have reaſon to wiſh, either from crimes into which they fall, or misfortunes which they undergo, that it had pleaſed God to take them to himſelf in their prime. If the dying perſon be unfit for a change, it is his own fault; he muſt endeavour to do what he can, and others muſt take warning by him; but if he be prepared, how happy is his caſe;— "ſpeedily, perhaps, he is taken away, leſt "wickedneſs ſhould alter his underſtand-"ing, or deceit beguile his ſoul." Such are the virtues which we ſhould practiſe, and ſuch the ſentiments which we ſhould entertain in the hour of ſickneſs. I do not, however, pretend to have exhauſted the ſubject; much more might be ſaid on it;

SERM. XX.

SERM. XX.

and when you come to the laſt ſcenes of this life, much more may be neceſſary for you to know and to practiſe: you will do well, therefore, to conſult on that awful occaſion with your prudent and ſincere friends, and more particularly with your miniſter. It is clearly his duty, and I ſhould hope that in moſt caſes it will be his pleaſure, to be of all the aſſiſtance to you in his power. We would not intrude ourſelves upon any one; but when we are actuated by feelings ſuitable to our ſacred office, we cannot but experience the greateſt ſatisfaction in having our aſſiſtance called for, and in enjoying the opportunity of ſmoothing the bed of ſickneſs, and preparing, to the beſt of our abilities, the dying perſon to ſtand before his judge.

I ſhall conclude with earneſtly requeſting you frequently to place before your minds the ſolemn period, concerning which I have been diſcourſing; a period, to which we are all haſtily approaching, and at which ſome of us, moſt probably, ſhall very ſoon arrive.

arrive. Such meditations, frequently repeated, will be the moſt powerful motives with us ſo to conduct ourſelves, as can alone give us fortitude to ſupport the bodily pains to which we may be doomed, alone enable us to meet our diſſolution undiſturbed by anguiſh and terror, inſpire us with a decent confidence to ſtand before our judge, and afford us a well-grounded expectation of receiving a favourable ſentence. SERM. XX.

SERMON XXI.

OF CASTING YOUR CARE UPON GOD.

1 PETER v. 7.

Caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

To caſt their care upon God, is one of the duties which the Apoſtle enjoins his diſciples, towards the concluſion of this epiſtle; and he perſuades them to the obſervation of the injunction by the ſtrongeſt of all arguments—" for God careth for you."

In the following diſcourſe, I ſhall explain what is meant by caſting your care upon God; ſecondly, what you are to underſtand

SERM. XXI.

derſtand by God's caring for you; and, laſtly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the force which there is in God's caring for you, to induce you to caſt your care upon him.

No command can be ſo plainly given but that ſome will miſtake it; and there have been perſons who have imagined that, by being ordered to caſt their care upon God, is meant that they ſhould take no care or trouble, themſelves, of any kind—that they ſhould be altogether idle—and not in any ſhape concern themſelves with earthly affairs;—but this is both contrary to reaſon and to many expreſs commands of ſcripture:—it is contrary to reaſon to ſuppoſe that we ſhould be ſent into this world and be required to pay no attention to its concerns—it is contrary alſo to reaſon to ſuppoſe that ſo many faculties, ſo many talents, ſo many paſſions, ſo much ability to be uſeful to our fellow-creatures, ſhould have been beſtowed on us to no end; and it is contrary to many expreſs commands of ſcripture, by which we are enjoined

enjoined to provide for ourſelves and our families, and to be induſtrious, that we may have it in our power to be charitable; neither of which can be done without ſome ſort of care. God expects from us exertions of this kind, and has made it a part of our duty to uſe them; but the care which the text commands us to part from, is that over-ſolicitude, that anxiety about the things of this world, which entirely abſorbs our attention and takes it off from the things of the next—this the apoſtle exhorts us to baniſh, and to leave the object of it to the providence of God. We may, with propriety, do all we innocently can, to procure the good and avoid the evil of this life: but when we have done all, we muſt leave the event to heaven, and not diſquiet and torment ourſelves about it. The nature and meaning of the command of "caſting our care upon God," being thus ſhortly explained, the argument by which we are perſuaded to obey it, follows—"for he careth for you."—God obſerves,

SERM. XXI.

ſerves, minutely, the affairs of men, and orders them for the beſt; we ought, therefore, to leave our concerns in his hands; and to reſt contented with his diſpoſal of them.

If you allow that there is a God, and that he made the world, I think it will follow, of courſe, that he governs it; for is it credible that a being who has been at the pains of raiſing ſuch a magnificent ſtructure, who has furniſhed it with ſuch an infinite variety of creatures ſo admirably ſuited to the uſe and ſervice of each other, ſhould, as ſoon as he had finiſhed it, entirely deſert his own work:—is it not rather to be concluded that he ſtill continues to ſuperintend it, that he ſtill continues to pervade and attend to what he has formed, and particularly to that nobleſt part of it, man!

Such was always the opinion of the beſt and wiſeſt of the heathens before the times of Chriſtianity; they not only believed that there was an all-powerful being, who created all things, but that he alſo perpetually

tually had an eye to and directed them; and though perhaps ſome of them thought that this his providence was confined to conſiderable affairs, while thoſe of leſs importance were left to their natural courſe, yet with us Chriſtians the matter is otherwiſe; we are aſſured by ſcripture, in many places, that not even the moſt inconſiderable thing happens without his agency or permiſſion; that his obſervation and interference are not partial and confined, but univerſal, and over all his works. We are told that God's providence extends to objects the leaſt and moſt inconſiderable,— " to the graſs of the field, which to-day " is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven; " to the fowls of the air, even to the ſparrows, two of which are ſold for a far- " thing, and yet not one of them falleth " to the ground without God." And if this be the caſe in theſe ſmall inſtances, how much more is it likely to be ſo in that of man, who was created after God's own image, and a little lower than the angels; SERM. XXI.

SERM. XXI.

angels; of man, to whom dominion over the whole creation was allotted; of man, for whoſe inſtruction the Son of God deſcended upon earth, and for whoſe ſalvation he ſubmitted to a cruel and ignominious death on the croſs. To the conduct and affairs of a creature thus highly born, thus nobly allied, and thus greatly favoured, God does certainly attend moſt minutely; all his thoughts, words and actions, are exactly noted, all his concerns are obſerved, "even the very hairs of his head "are numbered." Nor is God merely an indifferent ſpectator of the events of human life, but, as occaſion demands, he is likewiſe an active diſpoſer of them; he not only ſees what is tranſacting, but, as he thinks proper, interferes alſo: he frequently baffles the beſt contrived ſchemes of human wiſdom, where the mind of him, who laid them, proud and ſelf-conceited, thinks it impoſſible that the iſſue ſhould be different from what he had deſigned and expected; while, on the other hand, he often bleſſes

bleſſes the endeavours of the humble and the ignorant,—of thoſe who rely not on their own abilities, but commit themſelves to his protection, with unlooked-for and apparently impoſſible ſucceſſes. SERM. XXI.

Men doubt of the univerſal obſervation of God, becauſe they are apt to meaſure the divine faculties by their own: they find how hard it is for themſelves to attend to more than one thing at a time, and therefore they are with difficulty perſuaded that any other being can attend to ſuch an infinite number: but this ariſes from their narrow and contracted notions of the divine perfections: they forget that God made the world, that he ſtill ſuſtains it, and that if he were to withdraw his ſupport, all would again be reduced to nothing: they forget that his wiſdom and power are without bounds, and that he conſequently can obſerve and direct every thing without the ſmalleſt degree of trouble and diſquiet.

But

SERM. XXI.

But even of thoſe who allow the univerſal attention of God to what paſſes here below, there are ſome, perhaps, who doubt of his interference, becauſe they ſee many diſorders in the world, and meet with many occurrences which they think hard to be reconciled with the government of an all-good and all-powerful ruler; becauſe it often goes well with the wicked, while the righteous are in trouble and affliction.—But this is no argument, or at leaſt it is eaſily anſwered;—this life is a ſtate of trial, it is but as a moment in compariſon with the eternity which is to follow; what, if virtue do ſuffer here for a few fleeting years, and vice appear triumphant! there is a day coming when this ſeeming inconſiſtency will be fully rectified, when the providence of God will appear, and his juſtice be vindicated in the ſight of men and of angels, when no one ſhall have reaſon, either to glory in the wickedneſs which he has committed, or to complain of the calamities which he has undergone. Nay, even

even in this life, the apparent proſperity which is enjoyed by the vicious is often either the cauſe or the forerunner of their future miſery or deſtruction; while the afflictions, under which the righteous are ſeen to labour, frequently produce in their effects honour and happineſs. Elevated was the ſituation, and many were the circumſtances which conſpired together to the felicity of the Amalekite Haman; yet, amidſt all his good fortune, as he himſelf has confeſſed, he was miſerable:—yet did all his grandeur only ſerve to expoſe and conduct him to an ignominious and deſerved death.—On the other hand, it was through many hardſhips and much anguiſh that the virtuous Joſeph was raiſed to greatneſs and to power: thoſe who judged haſtily might have concluded him "ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted," and that his riſe from ſome ſituations of his life was impoſſible; yet were theſe ſufferings and this depreſſion, in the hands of him who maketh all things to work together for good to them

SERM. XXI.

SERM. XXI.

who love him, but ſo many ſteps in his aſcent, but ſo many cauſes of his ſubſequent glory: they conducted him to a ſtation, in which he ruled with honour, and ſaved from famine a great kingdom, and had the ineſtimable ſatisfaction, alſo, to be the preſerver of his own family. Theſe are two inſtances, out of a thouſand which might be brought, of the deceitfulneſs of outward appearances; they may ſerve to teach us not always to judge thoſe happy or miſerable, who appear ſo to human eyes. But it is not on what occurs in this world that I reſt my cauſe; it is on that future day of retribution, when the inequalities of this preſent life will certainly be all redreſſed. From what has been ſaid, I ſhould hope that the providence of God will readily be allowed, or, in other words, that it will appear evident that "he careth for us."—We will now ſee, laſtly, of what force this conſideration is, to perſuade us to obey the precept of the text — "to caſt our care "upon him."

SERM. XXI.

Thoſe who have obſerved that their beſt laid ſchemes have been diſconcerted, that where they have had the greateſt reaſon to flatter themſelves with ſucceſs, they have reaped nothing but diſappointment; if they had any friend, who was greatly their ſuperior in wiſdom and in power, and who at the ſame time had their intereſts as much at heart as themſelves, ſurely they would apply themſelves to him, and would rejoice highly if they could prevail upon him to undertake the management of their concerns. Such a friend is God; he ſees at one view what is moſt for our good; he is able to bring it about without the ſmalleſt exertion, and he loves us ſo entirely, that if we do but endeavour to deſerve it, we may be aſſured that he will bring it about. Who would not be contented and joyful, when he recollects that his affairs are under the protection of infinite wiſdom and power, in conjunction with infinite love and goodneſs! Who would not reſt ſatisfied with whatever calamities may befall him, when

SERM. XXI.

he remembers that they are inflicted or permitted by one, who, (if they are patiently ſubmitted to) will over-rule them to a much greater good. The conſideration, therefore, of the providence of God, ought not only to baniſh our anxiety about future events, but likewiſe to conſole and ſupport us under the preſſure of actual affliction. It was this conſideration which ſilenced David, when the bitterneſs of his ſorrows almoſt tempted him to repine:—"I held my peace, and "ſpake not a word, becauſe thou, Lord, "didſt it." It was this conſideration which produced the pious ſubmiſſion of Eli to the prophetic threatenings of Samuel:—"It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth "him good. It was this conſideration which ſuſtained the courage of Job under ſtill more heavy calamities, and enabled him to cry out in the midſt of anguiſh (apparently too exquiſite for humanity to ſupport)—"The Lord hath given, and the Lord "hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of "the Lord." We cannot ſee the works of God

God from the beginning to the end, and therefore ſometimes haſtily condemn; but when the veil of human fleſh ſhall be removed, when we ſhall be acquainted with the whole deſign of providence, and ſhall have penetrated to the laſt iſſue and reſult of all things, how ſhall we admire their wondrous beauty and proportion! The time will come when the judgment of God will break forth as the light, and his righteouſneſs as the noon-day; when thoſe apparent irregularities, which are to the ignorant ſtumbling-blocks, and to the wiſe fooliſhneſs, ſhall ſtand confeſſed, both by angels and men, to be worthy parts of that ſtupendous plan which was concerted by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and carried into execution by infinite power. SERM. XXI.

Let us be perſuaded then, to baniſh all painful anxiety as to what *may* happen, and all immoderate ſorrow as to what has happened: let us not diſquiet ourſelves in vain: all our ſolicitude, all our impatience, will be to no purpoſe; and a greater power than we

SERM. XXI.

we can control, orders our concerns for our good, if we deſerve his favour; and if we do not, it is not by diſcontents and murmurs that we can hope to increaſe our merits. We may lawfully, it is our duty, to uſe our beſt endeavours to procure the good, and avoid the evil of life; ſuch endeavours are the ordinary means by which all happineſs is to be ſought: but after having thus exerted ourſelves, we ſhould throw off all uneaſineſs as to the event; we ſhould leave that to God, and if it pleaſeth him to order it contrary to our wiſhes, we ſhould patiently and cheerfully acquieſce in his determinations, well aſſured that the diſappointments and afflictions of this world, which are but for a moment, will, if piouſly endured, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

END OF VOL. I.